



THE INDEPENDENT

Wednesday 24 September 1997

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TODAY'S NEWS

Historic Ulster clash was mild as celery

Ulster Unionists sat across the negotiating table from Sinn Féin yesterday in a meeting billed as a historic encounter: it was the first time the official Unionists had faced hard-line republicans for three-quarters of a century. In the event, it turned out to be low-key and subdued. The Unionists launched a prepared attack on Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness, calling for their expulsion from the talks. However, one of the non-combatants at the private Stormont session described the verbal assault as like "being beaten with a stick of celery". Page 3

Extra university funds

By paying out students' loans in three instalments next year, the Government succeeded in generating an extra £165m for universities next year - money that it hopes will be used to improve poorer students' prospects of going to college. Page 8

Christian exodus

In a special report, Robert Fisk finds that 2,000 years after the birth of Christ, Christians are fleeing their Middle East homelands, under the pressures of war and an increasingly militant Islam. Page 7

SEEN & HEARD

The producers of *EastEnders* were forced to apologise to the Irish yesterday after an episode of the soap, set in Dublin, portrayed many characters as drunken ignorant bores. More than 150 people rang the BBC to complain and the Irish embassy took up the cudgels on behalf of its people following the "stereotyped and prejudiced" episode. The Irish Tourist Board weighed in saying it was concerned at "the negative image of Irish hospitality" indicated by the soap. The programme showed a drunken man pour beer over one character, and then demand payment for the drink. Also in the cast was a rude, unfriendly hotelier, several surly relatives of Pauline Fowler and resentful, unwelcoming bar customers.

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TELEVISION The Eye, page 12
CROSSWORDS Page 32 and
the Eye, page 9

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Royal prerogative: The fates of Deborah Parry (left) and Lucille McLauchlan now rest with King Fahd

Photomontage: Mark Hayman

King Fahd's dilemma: Islamic justice versus Western values

British nurses Deborah Parry and Lucille McLauchlan were last night facing reported sentences of death and 500 lashes respectively, following the murder of a fellow nurse in Saudi Arabia. But, according to Jojo Moyes, frantic diplomatic efforts are likely to prevent a humanitarian and diplomatic crisis.

Last night the nurses slept in the Central Prison in Dammam, Saudi Arabia, apparently unaware of an unfolding diplomatic furor over reports that one had been sentenced to death, the other to 500 lashes and eight years in prison.

Lucille McLauchlan's sentence, for "offences related" to the death of Australian nurse Yvonne Gilford, was confirmed yesterday by her lawyers, who were told of it at a hearing in El Khobar and immediately lodged an appeal.

The Foreign Office was yesterday struggling to confirm the fate of Deborah Parry, also charged with Ms Gilford's murder, after lawyers representing Ms Gilford's family issued a statement saying that she had been sentenced to death by beheading.

"Defendant Deborah Parry has been found guilty of intentional murder punishable by death and defendant Lucille McLauchlan has been found guilty of related offences and sentenced to flogging and eight years in prison," said the Saudi-based International Law Firm.

Confusion followed. The Foreign Office and her lawyer in Saudi Arabia, Salah al-Hejailan, stressed that no verdict had been reached in respect of Ms Parry. But Mr Hejailan said that the victim's brother had agreed not to press for the death penalty. "A settlement has been signed with (Frank) Gilford to waive the death penalty. It is signed and done and witnessed and authenticated," he said. According to Sharia law, Mr Gilford can instead accept some form of reparation.

The Saudi ambassador to Britain, Ghazi Alqosbi, reiterated this. "If this agreement is finalised, and I understand it is, then there will be no question of the death penalty being imposed at any point of the proceedings," he told Sky News.

But in Britain, reaction to the women's reported fate was swift and unhappy. Foreign Secretary Robin Cook said he was "deeply concerned" by the severity of McLauchlan's sentence. "That is wholly unacceptable in a modern world. Nobody should be asked to put up with anything approaching that kind of physical punishment," he said, adding that he would be redoubling his efforts on the case.

The plight of the two nurses has captured the world's attention, prompting an unusual level of diplomatic activity. Less visible yesterday was diplomatic outrage at the news that between 85 and 200 men, women and children were massacred in Algeria, including those attempting to rescue the booty-trapped bodies of the others.

According to Amnesty International, there have been between 120 and 200 floggings in Saudi Arabia so far this year. Floggings take place publicly or behind prison walls, and are carried out using a metre-long bamboo cane. In more severe sentences, lashes may be "staggered"; one woman sentenced to 200 lashes last year received them in batches of 50 separated by a few days to allow her wounds to heal. If this were applied to Ms McLauchlan, her sentence could be carried out over a period of months, or even years.

INSIDE

Robert Fisk asks: What is the House of Saud really after?

Jojo Moyes describes the Muslim challenge to the Western perception of Sharia cruelty

Rupert Cornwell points out that while the fate of the two nurses grips the British press, Islamic fundamentalists slaughtered scores of women and children in Algeria.

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This year 107 people have been beheaded for murder, rape and drugs smuggling in the kingdom.

Diplomats and lawyers stressed yesterday that neither of the nurses was likely to receive the full reported sentence. But Britain and Saudi Arabia are now under heavy pressure to find a diplomatic solution acceptable to both sides. This is not surprising given the trade relationship between the two countries. Last year, visible exports from the UK, one quarter of them arms, totalled £2.5bn, while imports, mainly oil, totalled around £752m.

Both governments are apparently keen to avoid a repeat of the four-month diplomatic stand-off that took place following the television screening of the film *Death of a Princess*. This depicted the public beheading of a 19-year-old princess from the Saudi royal family who admitted committing adultery with a commoner.

The two British nurses were arrested on charges of murdering their colleague Ms Gilford in December at the hospital complex in eastern Saudi Arabia where they worked.

Ms Gilford was found stabbed 13 times, bludgeoned and suffocated in her room at the King Fahd military medical complex in Dhahran on 11 December. Ms Parry, 38, and Ms McLauchlan, 31, were charged with her murder the same month.

Yesterday's development came as an appeals court in the Saudi capital, Riyadh, was still reviewing the case as part of a lengthy mandatory appeals process. The procedure would involve a decision by yet another court and Saudi King Fahd. There was no word from Saudi authorities on the case.

But the parents of, and British lawyers for, Ms McLauchlan and Ms Parry said yesterday it was difficult to understand what had happened. They were "surprised and shocked" that the court had upheld a conviction based on confessions which were later withdrawn.

"Not one shred of evidence against either nurse has been heard in court. They have not had a trial, we just find it absolutely unbelievable," said Stan McLauchlan, Lucille's father. He added that he expected the women would only hear of the verdict on the BBC World Service on a radio in their cell. "That says everything about the system we are up against," he added.

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Tony Blair might himself have to make a pilgrimage to the land of the two Islamic holy places and show as much concern for the two peoples' nurses as he did for the people's late princess, writes Robert Fisk.

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From Syria to Egypt, from Lebanon to Israel, Christians of the Middle East are being squeezed out of the lands which have formed the cradle of their faith.

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New satellite pictures of the Earth give a unique insight into global vegetation patterns, and how these and the plants within them keep the planet alive.

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Jonathan Aitken is following in Jeffrey Archer's footsteps, turning from politics to fiction. His new novel is believed to be about a public figure brought down by the envy and cynicism of lesser mortals.

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Many white people in South Africa feel that the country's government is trampling unnecessarily on sensibilities by removing statues and renaming streets, but, for many blacks, the pace of post-apartheid change is not fast enough.

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The Comedie Francaise, the world's oldest national theatre, founded by the Sun King, comes to London for the first time in almost a quarter of a century.

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Top business leaders will today meet Tony Blair to complain about the strength of the pound.

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Tiger Woods makes his debut in the Ryder Cup - and he has the perfect temperament for it.

TOURIST RATES

Australia (dollars)	2.16	Italy (lira)	2,735.00
Austria (schillings)	19.60	Japan (yen)	193.19
Belgium (francs)	57.62	Malta (lira)	0.61
Canada (\$)	2.17	Netherlands (guilders)	3.14
Cyprus (pounds)	0.82	Norway (kroner)	11.39
Denmark (kroner)	10.68	Portugal (escudos)	281.67
France (francs)	9.37	Spain (pesetas)	234.43
Germany (marks)	2.80	Sweden (kroner)	12.02
Greece (drachme)	443.69	Switzerland (francs)	2.30
Hong Kong (\$)	12.07	Turkey (lira)	26,352.00
Ireland (punts)	1.06	USA (\$)	1.57

Source: Thomas Cook

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PEOPLE



Cherie Booth with Ms Phelps outside the High Court after the hearing Photograph: Reuters

Dyslexic successfully sues education authority

Pamela Phelps, a dyslexic, brought hope to hundreds of fellow sufferers yesterday when she successfully sued her former education authority for failing to spot the condition.

In a landmark judgment, the High Court awarded £45,650 damages to Ms Phelps after hearing how she had been condemned to a life of "temporary menial tasks" because of her "inadequate" education.

The ruling is likely to open the way for hundreds of dyslexics preparing similar legal claims against their schools and local education authorities.

Ms Phelps' solicitor, Jack Rabinowitz, whose firm is handling 50 such cases, said: "Many children have been badly let down and this case will mean they can now go ahead to claim compensation." He added: "Pamela hopes that her success will mean that other children will not have to go through the trauma that she had, and that there will be... better appreciation of the needs of special-needs children."

Later, David Hart, general secretary of the National Association of Head Teachers, warned the ruling could have "devastating" implications for schools. "It implies that schools are going to be at much greater risk of claims for damages," he said.

In his judgment, Mr Justice Garland ruled that Hillingdon Borough Council was liable for breaches of duty of care by educational psychologist Diane Melling who failed to diagnose that Pamela was dyslexic in 1985. Miss Melling "erred" in attributing her learning difficulties to emotional problems.

Ms Phelps went to Hayes Park Infants School in 1978 and was referred for the first time to an educational specialist at the end of 1980. She was not seen by an educational psychologist until she moved to Mellow Lane Comprehensive School in 1985. Cherie Booth QC, who represented Pamela at the hearing in July, said the condition was only spotted when her family saw a television programme on the subject and arranged for her to have tests.

After yesterday's decision Ms Phelps, from Hayes End, Middlessex, said she would use the money for special tuition and hoped to take GCSEs eventually so she could become "rich and famous".

— Michael Streeter



Pavarotti and Verdi prove to be the ultimate duet as concerts sell out

Tickets to hear Luciano Pavarotti singing Verdi's *Requiem* with the Philharmonia in the Royal Festival Hall in December sold out in two hours.

It is the first time that the South Bank Centre in London has welcomed both Pavarotti and his fellow tenor, Placido Domingo, to the hall. In the past, the centre has talked more of expanding pop and rock music, but the 1997-1998 season focuses on the six resident orchestras, ranging from the London Philharmonic to the Alban Berg Quartet. The Philharmonia season until next March is already

65 per cent sold. Such sales go some way to confirming the claim of Nicholas Snowman, the centre's artistic director, that attendances at classical concerts are, marginally, on the increase.

Other highlights on the South Bank this winter include Nigel Kennedy playing Elgar, Sir Simon Rattle conducting the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, and the Royal Ballet, featuring Doreen Bussell, Viviana Durante and Leanne Benjamin, with *Tales of Beatrix Potter* and *Pen and the Wolf*.

— Clare Garner

Hopkins's Hannibal voted baddest baddie ever

Hannibal Lecter is the most evil movie character ever, according to a top 100 of film bad guys.

The cannibal with a taste for Chianti, memorably portrayed by Anthony Hopkins in *Silence of the Lambs*, is top baddie in the list prepared by *Total Film* magazine. It follows last month's selection of Harrison Ford as the top film actor of all time in an *Empire* magazine poll.

Behind Dr Lecter in *Total Film* magazine is Henry, played by Michael Rooker in *Portraits of a Serial Killer*. John Doe as portrayed by Kevin Spacey in *Seven*, Joe Pesci's Tommy DeVito in *Goodfellas* and Frank Booth from *Blue Velvet*, one of a

long line of Dennis Hopper baddies. *Blue Velvet* is the only pre-1990 film in the top five, supporting the theory that film baddies get worse.

There are only seven evil women in the top 100, topped at number 15 by the Kathy Bates character from *Misery*, the role that won her an Oscar.

● Vinnie Jones, the Wimbledon footballer with a mean reputation, told *Total Film* his favourite Disney film was *Jungle Book*, mainly because of his Baloo the bear: "He was the best dresser in the whole jungle, and he was a good bloke who always looked after his mates."

UPDATE

HEALTH

Early-death warning for the obese

One in five adults risks an early death because of obesity, an expert warned yesterday. But many of those at risk are unlikely to be helped because doctors and patients are not on the same wavelength.

Professor Tony Winder, of the Royal Free Hospital in Hampstead, London, claims that while doctors and other health workers are concerned about the health risks associated with obesity, such as stroke, heart disease, diabetes and osteoarthritis, patients are more worried about the low self-esteem which often comes with being fat and the possible loss of their social lives.

"We all know that fat people eat more than they need, although that may still not seem much," he said. "The question is - what are we going to do about it and who is going to take the lead? First we have to get the patients and health people on the same wavelength, then to establish team systems for working with patients on their problems." The subject of how obesity should be treated was to be debated at the hospital yesterday.

CRIME

Judiciary reluctant to tackle racism

Government plans to force judges to hand out tougher sentences to people convicted of racially motivated crimes have received a boost from new evidence showing that the judiciary is reluctant to take on racism.

A study conducted by the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) shows that judges only use their discretionary power to add time to sentences, where racism has been a motive, in 20 per cent of cases.

The paper shows that between April 1996 and March 1997 the CPS identified 937 cases of harassment or violence where the perpetrator was acting partially or wholly out of racist bigotry. But in only 181 of those cases did judges indicate that the sentence was increased as a result of this information.

The figures will add weight to the case for tougher sentences for racially motivated crimes to become obligatory. Government proposals, which are expected to form part of Home Secretary Jack Straw's Crime and Disorder Bill, will be published within weeks.

— Paul George

TRANSPORT

Japan's trains take track record



There may be faster ways of travelling, but not on railway tracks. Japan's latest *shinkansen* bullet trains are now officially the fastest passenger carriages in the world, according to a global survey by *Railway Gazette*.

The 120-mile stretch from Hiroshima to Kokura takes only 44 minutes as Japanese travellers are propelled at more than 160mph on the *shinkansen*. The French TGV, for 15 years the world's speediest service, races along at a little more than 158mph from Lille to Paris.

Eurostar manages to claim third place, on its journey from Paris to Mons, where it clocks more than 130mph. Britain's fastest railway, Great North Eastern, takes sixth spot with its 190-mile trip from London to York which runs at an average speed of 112 mph. However, this title may soon slip away from the east-coast service. Chris Jackson, deputy editor of *Railway Gazette*, pointed out that Richard Branson's Virgin group had ordered trains that will run at 160 mph: "They are talking about it, but Virgin's West Coast service needs to upgrade a lot of track first," he said.

— Randeep Ramesh

INSURANCE

Private medicine loses its appeal

The lure of private medicine has lost its lustre, according to the latest figures. Despite the booming economy, the better-off are refusing to use their wealth to pay for medical insurance that guarantees them privacy, a choice of menu and a chat with the consultant when they are ill.

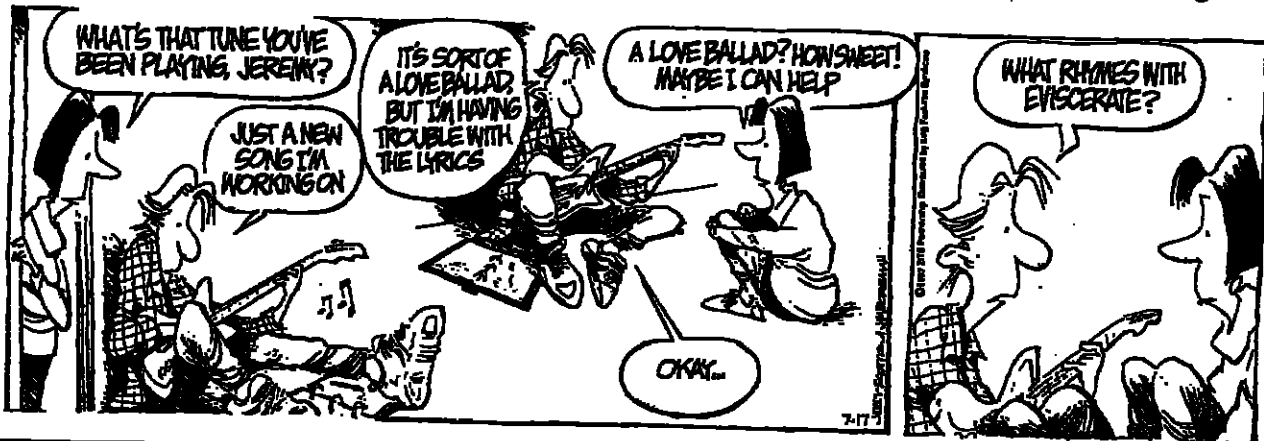
The number of people covered by private medical insurance, at almost 6.4 million, is lower than it was six years ago, at the start of the recession, according to *Laing's Review of Private Health Care 1997*, published today. Although the drop of 200,000 since 1990 is attributed to a change in the way the figures are counted, the report says that "no significant volume growth has taken place" over the past six years.

A key reason is the sharp rise in premiums, up 7.4 per cent last year and up 58 per cent since 1990 to an average £553 per subscriber in 1996. People who have private cover are using it more and appear to be keeping new subscribers out of the market by driving up premiums.

— Jeremy Laurance

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3/IRISH TALKS

THE INDEPENDENT
WEDNESDAY
24 SEPTEMBER 1997

Moment of history turns into a damp squib

The Ulster Unionist Party and Sinn Féin yesterday met face to face for the first time in the multi-party talks at Stormont in Belfast. David McKinnon, Ireland Correspondent, suggests that they resulted in something closer to a whimper than a bang.

After an unexpectedly short and low-key encounter, the British and Irish governments will now attempt to end the procedural trench warfare and propel the talks into real negotiations by Monday of next week.

This is to be done by the introduction of a procedural motion, the terms of which were being worked on overnight, which would effectively herald the start of real negotiations.

Yesterday's session was described as historic in that it brought Ulster Unionist and republican leaders together in the same room for the first time in generations. Next week promises to be even more significant if the two sides begin to do business, even if only at a distance.

The Unionist party brought forward an indictment against Sinn Féin, seeking to have the republicans expelled from Stormont. This took the form of a 30-minute attack by the party's security spokesman, Ken Maginnis MP.

Mr Maginnis and his party leader, David Trimble, then left the room before Sinn Féin's president, Gerry Adams, made his reply, though other Unionists stayed behind.

According to a number of sources Mr Adams's reply was made in generalised terms, taking up less than 10 minutes. One person who was present said: "It was not a very sharp Unionist attack. It was a piece of cake for Adams to deal with it - he just took the high road, said he wanted to look forward, stretch out the hand of peace, and so on."

Various other parties contributed to the discussion, but the session lasted only 90 minutes, rather than the three hours which had been set aside for it. The British gov-



Youthful hope: Pupils leaving St Dominic's Roman Catholic girls school in West Belfast yesterday as the talks continued at Stormont Photograph: Brian Harris

ernment is to give its ruling on the indictment today, but it is considered a foregone conclusion that Sinn Féin will not be ejected from Stormont.

The Unionist party has made it clear that it will remain in the talks even if, as

expected, Sinn Féin are not thrown out, though Mr Trimble said the party would vary its tactics on a day-to-day basis.

One participant described the session as a damp squib, while another said the Unionist attack must have been like "be-

ing beaten with a stick of celery." The middle of the road Alliance Party said the occasion had been "like a boxing match where one of opponents had attacked the referee and the crowd but had not laid a glove on his opponent."

The Government will be happy that the occasion has passed without real fireworks and that it appeared to assume an element of ritual rather than posing any obvious danger to the continuation of talks. Outside the talks Mr Maginnis contin-

ued the attack on Sinn Féin, declaring: "The truth will come out about Sinn Féin and the IRA and the Secretary of State had better guard her language very carefully in how she responds to the charges we put today. She had better be careful what she says in case her words turn round and bite her."

"We know that Martin McGuinness and Gerry Adams have been actively involved in the IRA's terrorist campaign since the beginning as activists, as commanders and now as godfathers. Let them deny what everyone knows and make greater liars of themselves than they already are."

Emerging from the talks Mr Adams dismissed the Unionist indictment as a sham, declaring: "This was hailed as the great confrontation, the great showdown, the great challenge to Sinn Féin. But the leaders of Unionism came into the room, made a submission and then scampered out of the room to talk to the media."

"David Trimble didn't say anything and had he listened to what I had to say, I made the point that every section of our people have suffered and that none of us have a monopoly on suffering."

Mr Trimble was attacked by the Rev Ian Paisley's Democratic Unionist Party for taking part in the talks process. Peter Robinson MP said: "Today's sham fight at Stormont is but the slip road to full negotiations between the Ulster Unionists and the IRA."

"Trimble and company have ditched every commitment they gave and every principle they held. Boy David may come out beating his chest, but in reality he is beating a retreat."

British and Irish government ministers met last night to plan the next move in the talks.

Mr Trimble was seeking to remodel the talks process.

"There will be other ways and other opportunities for us to put Sinn Féin on the back foot. We will pick and choose what we do and our tactics."

"We are there not to negotiate with Sinn Féin and there is no obligation for us to be present the whole time. We will negotiate with the Government and other parties. We can pick and choose bilaterals," he said.

A bunch of toughs, a bottle of Guinness, aristocratic sex, and the odd de Valera lecture on Irish history



Michael Collins: Hoped to coax Northern Ireland into a union

The tale of the last time Ulster Unionists formally met republicans, 75 years ago, involves political drama, a great deal of violence, several bottles of Guinness and a certain amount of sex.

In 1921, with killings going on in both parts of Ireland, James Craig, prime minister of the fledgling northern state, courageously placed himself in the hands of the IRA to meet Eamon de Valera in Dublin. It was an awkward encounter, not least because a duplicitous British official had told each man that the other had requested the meeting.

De Valera recalled: "I said after the first few moments' silence, 'Well? I then said, 'I'm too old at this political business to have nonsense of this kind, each waiting for the other to begin', and I started putting our case to him."

De Valera launched into one of his legendarily protracted reviews of Irish history, Craig later recounting that after

half an hour he "had reached the end of the era of Brian Boru". The meeting came to nothing, Craig judging de Valera "impossible".

A series of more promising meetings took place the following year between Craig and Michael Collins.

Winston Churchill, as colonial secretary, brought them together, later recording: "They met in my room at the Colonial Office which, despite its enormous size, seemed overcharged with electricity. They both glowered magnificently but after a short, commonplace talk I slipped away upon some excuse and left them together. What these two Irishmen, separated by such gulfs of religion, sentiment, and conduct, said to each other I cannot tell."

Churchill sent them in for lunch not only mutton chops but also several bottles of Guinness, apparently ignorant of the fact that Collins did not like porter.

Even without its lubricating qualities, however, Craig and Collins unexpectedly succeeded in reaching agreement on a number of issues.

According to Craig, he asked Collins "straight out whether it was his intention to have peace in Ireland or whether we were to go on with murder and strife, rivalry and boycott and unrest in Northern Ireland". Collins, he reported, "made it clear that he wanted a real peace, but hoping to coax her [Northern Ireland] into a union later".

Within days, however, the accord was swamped by escalating violence. Two further meetings were held, the second producing a detailed agreement headed by the statement: "Peace is today declared." Once again, however, the tide of violence swept the agreement aside as the south degenerated into civil war.

The element of sex in the tale came from the exotic Anglo-Irish Londonderry family. Craig was accompanied at the final meeting by Lord Londonderry, a member of his cabinet, who also met Collins privately and later enthused: "I can say at once that I spent three of the most delightful hours that I ever spent in my life."

Londonderry may not have known that his wife had formed a close and apparently sexual attachment to Collins. In a passionate letter Collins wrote to her, he said of her husband: "I contrast myself with him, my uncouthness with his distinction, my rough speech with his unconscious breeding and the worst of it is I like and admire him and feel that he is brave and honest."

The 1920s meetings contain many echoes of modern politics but seem to offer few lessons apart, perhaps, from the general point that busy politicians should keep an eye on their wives.

— David McKinnon



Lady Londonderry: Passionate correspondence with Collins

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Smuggled meat sets back hopes for easing beef ban

Hopes for an easing of the European Union's ban on British beef suffered a fresh setback yesterday after the European Commission said it had evidence that smuggled beef from the United Kingdom was getting into Germany. Brussels has asked the German authorities to order the closure of at least one meat plant and to step up controls on a handful of others, all in the Hamburg region. Bonn, which holds the key to any decision to relax the ban, immediately ruled out any support for special concessions even to Northern Ireland. Jack Cunningham, the Minister for Agriculture, admitted that Bonn's reaction in yesterday's meeting was tougher than anticipated.

The latest fraud concerns an unspecified tonnage of suspected British beef seized from plants in Germany which were raided by inspectors last week. There are growing fears in Brussels that a highly organised international fraud ring is smuggling British beef in the EU, and also to Russia.

— Katherine Butler, Brussels

Nuclear fusion sets record

Europe's flagship nuclear fusion programme has achieved a new record power output, taking the world another small but significant step down the long road to a virtually unlimited, environmentally friendly fuel source. Earlier this week the Joint European Torus (JET) in Abingdon, Oxfordshire, set a new record by generating more than 12 megawatts of fusion power — the same process that fuels the sun. This set a record for the ratio of power generated to power input: JET achieved an "efficiency" of 50 per cent, double that achieved before.

Fusion would create no hazardous waste, and could be fuelled from the sea for millions of years. However, the main thing that fusion generates at the moment is bills: JET alone has an annual budget of £54m. But scientists do not think a fusion power station will be feasible until the middle of the next century, 100 years after the concept was devised.

— Charles Arthur

PC wins tribunal against force

A policewoman who said she was told by a senior officer that women did not belong in the police and she was "taking jobs from his boys" yesterday won her sexual discrimination case. Kay Kellaway, 34, also told an industrial tribunal in Reading that she was thrown to the ground by a male inspector who called her a "whore, bitch and slag" while a report suggested she was a lesbian.

The tribunal, by a two to one majority, yesterday found that Ms Kellaway had been "discriminated against and victimised on account of her sex" by Thames Valley Police. The force, which now faces the prospect of a compensation claim from PC Kellaway, immediately said it was considering appealing against the finding.

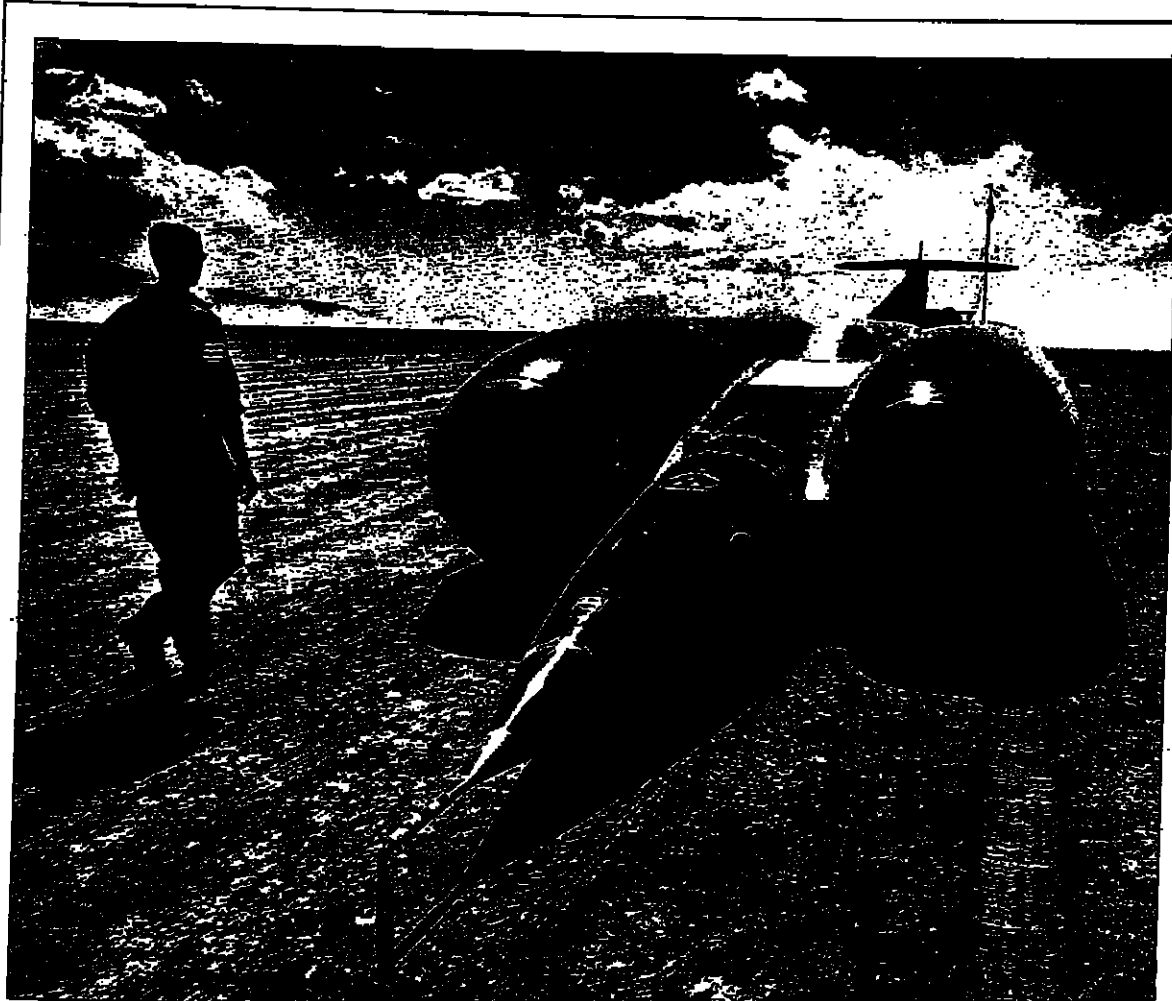
— Jason Bennetto, Crime Correspondent

Youth jail grossly overcrowded

A jail for young offenders aged under 21 is "bursting at the seams" with a "disturbing" number of 15- and 16-year-olds being locked up, a critical report published yesterday said. Feltham Young Offenders Institution in west London had become a "gigantic transit camp" which was "grossly overcrowded" with more than 900 inmates, said Sir David Ramsbotham, Chief Inspector of Prisons. He said that the increasing numbers and shortage of resources at the jail made it incapable of tackling re-offending.

Sir David is about to publish a special report on the condition of young offenders, which he believes need urgent attention and a designated director.

— Jason Bennetto



Ground flight: Pilot Andy Green walks towards Thrust SSC in preparation for his attempt yesterday evening on the land-speed record in Nevada, United States
Photograph: Rex Features

Genetic tests arrive in the post

Companies offer genetic testing by post, to let prospective parents know the risk of having a child with cystic fibrosis. More tests are coming — for breast cancer, diabetes, perhaps even Alzheimer's, but the Government can't, or won't, legislate. Charles Arthur, Science Editor, asks why.

Companies which offer genetic testing to the public will not be subject to legislation, a government-appointed committee said yesterday. But the members admitted that no law covers such companies, and that framing

one would be extremely difficult.

At least two companies in the UK, University Diagnostics (UDL) of London and Leeds Antenatal Screening Service (LASS), already offer "postal" testing for the inherited genetic disease of cystic fibrosis. For between £65 and £98, they will examine a sample of saliva and determine whether it comes from someone who carries a mutation of the gene that causes the disease. If two parents have a mutated CF gene, there is a 25 per cent chance that their child will have the illness.

Tests for CF are just the beginning. Soon, companies will be able to test for a range of "late-onset" diseases, where having particular genes means the patient may become ill with breast cancer, diabetes, Alzheimer's, asthma and many other conditions which at present are only

temporarily linked to genetic causes.

The Advisory Committee on Genetic Testing (ACGT), chaired by Professor Marcus Pembrey, yesterday published a code of practice and guidance for companies which supply human tests. It decided that tests should not be offered to people under 16, and that counselling about the meaning of a positive test should be available at no extra charge.

Professor Pembrey said that the latter was necessary because "the technique [of testing] may be simple, but interpretation is difficult".

The ACGT's decision to shy away from legislation stemmed partly from the lack of any law which could be used against companies offering testing. "In the end, it's just a service," said a Department of Health spokesman.

Free vote for MPs on lowering gay age of consent to 16

MPs are to be offered a free vote on lowering the age of sexual consent for gay men to 16, paving the way for a change in the law. The move, which is expected to be announced by the Government in the next few days, is almost certain to lead to the reduction of the age limit for homosexual men from 18 to 16. It is understood that the new limit, which was reduced from 21 three years ago, is expected to become law by the beginning of 1999.

The move follows a decision by Jack Straw, the Home Secretary, to agree to a free vote in the Commons rather than face a defeat in the European Court of Human Rights over Britain having a higher age of consent for gay men than heterosexuals.

In return, Stonewall, the gay rights' campaign group, has agreed to halt its European challenge to the UK laws. They have backed a case brought by Euan Sutherland, 20, a student, against the Government. Mr Sutherland argued that the higher age of consent breached his right of privacy and the right not to be discriminated against in his private life. A second challenge has been launched by Chris Morris, 18, who also argues that the current law is discriminatory.

Mr Straw is expected to make his announcement as soon as the European Commission publishes its response to Mr Sutherland's application. This could be as early as tomorrow.

A free vote in the Commons is expected to provide a thumping majority for lowering the age of consent, particularly as the party leaders Tony Blair, William Hague and Paddy Ashdown all voted in favour of 16 in the 1994 vote, which was defeated by a 27 majority. If there is a yes vote to a change, the Government could include it as an amendment to the forthcoming Crime and Disorder Bill. However, it is more likely to be in a separate Bill; legislation could then be introduced in just over a year.

— Jason Bennetto, Crime Correspondent

DAILY POEM

Night Garden of the Asylum

by Elizabeth Jennings

An owl's call scrapes the stillness.
Curtains are barriers and behind them
The beds settle into neat rows,
Soon they'll be rifled.

The garden knows nothing of illness.
Only it knows of the slow gleam
Of stars, the moon's disilluminating
Why the beds and lawns are levelled.

Then all is broken from its fullness.
A human cry cuts across a dream.
A wild hand squeezes an open rose.
We are in witchcraft, bedevilled.

This week's poems come from *Beyond Bedlam* (Anvil Press, £7.95). An anthology of work "written out of mental distress", it has been edited by Ken Smith and Matthew Sweeney to mark the 750th anniversary of the Bethlem Royal and Maudsley hospitals; proceeds from the volume go to three mental health charities. Elizabeth Jennings's poem appears in her *Collected Poems* (Corgi).

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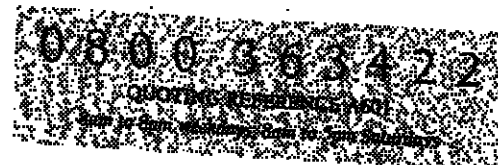
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Blair may be forced to make pilgrimage

Nothing, they say, ever happens by accident in the Middle East. And the Saudi court conviction and sentencing of Deborah Parry and Lucille McLachlan is no different. True, Saudi Arabia is a state more fundamentalist, far more illiberal – if the very word "liberal" could ever be used in a Saudi context – and, these days, more brutal than Iran. True, its religious *mutawana* police are largely ignorant zealots. And true, Saudi Arabia has an unhappy habit of chopping off heads outside mosques every Friday – every year, two or three of them of women – but the heads tend to belong to Sri Lankans or Nigerians or Filipinos or Indians or Pakistanis.

While the last remnants of the British empire faded away in the Gulf in the 1970s, killing young English ladies is still not the kind of behaviour that the Saudis would undertake lightly. And it isn't just a question of whether the Saudi Embassy in London would be burned to the ground by mobs and its gentle and literate ambassador given undiplomatic treatment by outraged Britons. Britain remains one of the

principle armours of the kingdom, as well as being the staunchest ally in the Gulf to that most loyal and greedy of Saudi Arabia's friends: the United States.

And, since Saudi courts are little more than a mockery – readers in doubt should call up Amnesty and ask for their latest file on the country – the sentencing of the two British nurses must have political reasons.

BY ROBERT FISK

So what are the Saudis unhappy about in Britain just now? It is impossible to escape the name of Mohamed al-Masari, the Saudi dissident whom John Major tried to deport to a remote holiday island but whom the courts decided could stay in Britain. The Saudis were enraged by this decision – just as they are furious with the continued base in London of other opponents of the royal family. Mr al-Masari would rather like the king and

his princes to meet the sort of fate that one of the nurses might supposedly endure. And if Mr al-Masari were to be sent back to Saudi Arabia, he, no doubt, would endure just such a fate.

King Fahd can ultimately quash any sentence. But, given the Saudi propensity to continue with this case, it looks as though the Foreign Office is going to have to perform some party routines. Praise for the Saudi royal family along with some special pleading and gentle reminders of Gulf War sacrifice, perhaps? Or promises to shut up Mr al-Masari and his mates – a swift bit of legislation about the use of fax machines might bring a smile to the FOC men.

Or maybe the Saudis need a bigger institution to grovel to them for mercy. Heads of state visiting Riyadh are regularly reminded that the House of Saud demands respect. In the end, therefore, Tony Blair might himself have to make a pilgrimage to the land of the two Islamic holy places and show as much concern for the two peoples' nurses as he did for the late people's princess.



Yvonne Gilford: The Saudis could be using the nurses allegedly guilty of her murder as a lever

In Algeria 200 die but the West looks away

On the day that national attention was focused on the fate of two British nurses accused of a murder in Saudi Arabia, Islamic militants in a Muslim country far closer to Europe murdered at least 85 people by cutting their throats, disembowelling them, or burning them alive.

The butchery has been going on for almost six years. For most papers and broadcasters, it doesn't seem to be 'news'. Rupert Cornwell describes the latest horror in Algeria.

The latest massacre, in the suburb of Baraki, barely 20km (13 miles) from the centre of Algiers, was as bestial as any during the Islamic fundamentalist insurgency which may have cost up to 60,000 lives since the army-backed regime cancelled elections in late 1991.

According to security forces, 85 people were killed and 67 wounded. The victims had been "assassinated in a cowardly way", a phrase denoting they had their throats cut. Some of the bodies were then burnt. Algerian television showed images of charred houses, their floors covered in blood.

But residents were quoted as saying that at least 200 people lost their lives in the butchery, which would make the second deadliest attack since the fighting began in 1992. It came just three days after 53 people were killed in a village in the Medea region, south-west of the capital. Press reports said the victims included babies, one of whom was found nailed to the door of a house. Eyewitnesses spoke of babies being decapitated. Eight rescue workers were reportedly wounded by boobytraps planted in disembowelled bodies of victims, some of whom were pregnant women.

Despite his inability to stop the carnage, President Liamine Zerroual has refused offers of mediation from the United Nations. In the absence of a truce, terror now grips the populace. Self defence militias, armed with guns and axes, have sprung up in Algiers and the surrounding countryside to provide the protection the Government cannot. Public opinion in Europe is unmoved.

Code of law centuries away from British legal system

According to its defenders, the Sharia, the Muslim code of law, is far from the brutal system commonly portrayed in the press.

It is, however, very different from the British legal system. Courts usually sit in closed session and judges interpret laws rigidly from eighth-century Koranic and prophetic texts. The best judges, or *qadis*, are considered to be those straight from college because of their assumed purity.

In cases of murder, such as with Yvonne Gilford, the state is bound to respect the wishes of the victim's family.

The Koran gives relatives of a murder victim the absolute right to insist on a "life for a life". Yet it heaps praise on those who forgive and pardon.

"Hand-chopping" is applied only in very specific kinds of theft and under most stringent conditions.

Criminals, for example, do not lose hands for embezzlement, forgery, stealing public money, or stealing items not properly protected.

There are other examples of a more liberal approach. According to the Sharia, a wife, in the marriage contract, can retain the right to divorce and can specify the financial settlement when a divorce occurs.

Likewise, adultery cannot be established unless four witnesses convince the court that they saw with their own eyes "the whole thing".

But the system is not welcomed by everyone. Lawyers for Parry and McLachlan said yesterday: "Whilst it is accepted that the Saudi judicial system must operate under its own rules of procedure, it is difficult to understand a system which provides the accused with no information as to the evidence he or she faces and a judicial process where no witness evidence is heard."

And punishments, when they come, are unequivocal.

There have been 100 executions in Saudi Arabia so far this year. Earlier this month, five Saudis were beheaded after being found guilty of kidnapping and raping a young boy, while a Filipino was executed for stabbing a man to death.

Three months ago, a young west African woman was beheaded in public in Jeddah, while three other women – two Pakistanis and a Saudi – had their heads cut off in Saudi Arabia last year. The Saudi

woman had been convicted of shooting her husband; the others were all convicted of smuggling drugs.

Amnesty International estimates there have been between 120 and 200 floggings in Saudi Arabia this year. Two of those involved secondary school students convicted of assaulting their teacher. Amnesty says that in 1995 an Egyptian national was sentenced to 4,000 lashes.

— Jojo Moyes

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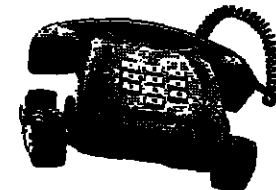
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DIRECT LINE	7.8%	£568.47		£178,258

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Leaders of the churches of the Middle East waiting at Beirut airport to greet the Pope at the start of his Lebanon visit last May. The Pope made a plea for Christians not to desert the region

Photograph: Robert Fisk

Christians of the Arab world flee their Biblical homeland

The Christians of the Middle East are making an unprecedented exodus from the lands in which their ancestors have lived since Christ taught here. At least two million are estimated to have left in the past five years alone, leaving only 12 million Christians in and around the lands of the Bible. And, as Robert Fisk reports from Bkerke, Lebanon, half the entire million-strong Christian population of the Arab world's most moderate state have departed in just 20 years.

When I walked into Father Michel Awir's office in the Christian Maronite Patriarchate yesterday afternoon, two middle-aged ladies were seeking his help. Could he call a Western embassy and help them obtain a visa to leave Lebanon? They were pleading with him. "What can I do?" he asked me, raising his shoulders in despair. "I do not want them to go - but I must help

them." Every day, the Christians drift up to the great stone palace of Cardinal Nasrallah Sfeir above Beirut to appeal for assistance in leaving the land in which their forebears have lived for two millennia.

Fr Michel fully understands the tragedy. He is the historian of Lebanon's Maronites - who are affiliated to the Roman Catholic church - and knows all too well that since the start of the country's 1975-90 civil war, the nation has haemorrhaged its Christian population. "We were a little more than a million before the war but we have lost 500,000 of our people in 22 years," he says. "The Maronites love liberty and freedom. When a Christian here sees that liberty is infringed upon, he becomes angry."

Whether or not liberties are in danger is a matter of fierce debate in Syrian-dominated Lebanon. But the disaster overwhelming the Maronite community in the country - one that Muslims suggest is of their own making - is mirrored elsewhere in the Middle East. Egypt's 6 million Christian Copts are leaving their country in tens of thousands - the community is "holding its own" by breeding as fast as its population leaves and still stands at 6 million, about 10 per cent of the population. But

Christians are increasingly a target for Islamists opposed to the government in Cairo - 25 of the 77 Egyptians murdered since February have been Christian villagers in upper Egypt - while the regime insists that even the repair of churches must receive official permission.

In Iraq, at least 50,000 Assyrian Christians left in the immediate aftermath of the 1991 Gulf War, many of them to the United States. This exodus - which still brings thousands of Christians to the Turkish and Iranian borders - was caused partly by the harshness of UN sanctions against Iraq. Church authorities in Jerusalem, where scarcely 2 per cent of the population are now Christian, lay the blame for their own plight on the Israelis and on US government support for Israel. "The Christian fundamentalists in the US support the idea of Jerusalem as the eternal capital of Israel," a church official told me yesterday. "And the US consulate in Jerusalem is the easiest place for a Palestinian to get a visa to America. Isn't that strange? Of course, the Palestinian Christians are very grateful to receive those visas. But it reduces both the Palestinian population of the city and the Christian population at the same time."

The Rev Lewis Scudder, assistant to the general secretary of the Middle East Council of Churches in Cyprus, admits that while there are no official statistics of the Christian exodus, "we know it is happening - and it is an anxiety in the church because it is the young who are leaving. And if they go, where is the next generation of adults?"

Ironically - given the Lebanese Maronite distrust of Syria - Mr Scudder says that the only Arab nation in which the Christians are maintaining their normal presence is Syria. "It remains a secular society and they feel part of the society - the state broadcasts Christian and Easter services on television," he says.

One reason may be President Hafez Assad's ruthless suppression of the Muslim rebellion in the Syrian city of Hama in 1982, a bloodbath that Egypt's President Hosni Mubarak has so far shrunk from visiting upon his own enemies. But Fr Michel says Maronites are still leaving Syria, if not in the same numbers as their co-religionists in Lebanon.

Mr Scudder believes that the exodus is partly caused by socio-economic improvements and mobility among the Middle East's middle-class Christians rather than

THE BELIEVERS

Egypt: Population about 60 million, of whom about 10 per cent are Christian, mostly Copts. Iraq: About 3 per cent of the 18 million population are Christians, including Chaldean rite Catholics, Assyrians and Syrian Orthodox. Israel: Population about 5 million, of whom 28,000 are Christian, though this includes the whole of Jerusalem. Occupied Territories and Gaza: Population about 2.5 million. Christians are few in Gaza, and about 2 per cent on the West Bank, mostly Greek Orthodox or Catholic. Jordan: Population 4.5 million, of whom about 3 per cent are Christians. Lebanon: The 3 million population is about 65 per cent are Muslim and 35 per cent Christian, most of them Maronite Catholics. Syria: No official statistics. It is thought about 10 per cent of Syria's 13 million are Christian, mostly of the Syrian Orthodox Church.

persecution - and the pro-Iranian Hizbollah leader in Lebanon, Sayed Hassan Nasrallah, is on good terms with the Maronite cardinal whom he has visited at Bkerke - but Lebanese Maronites are not so sure.

They say that under Syria's power, Lebanon's elections are a sham and its Christian parliamentary deputies and minister - under the national pact, the presi-

dent is always a Maronite - are in effect stooges of Damascus. Yet the Christians are not entirely blameless. It was the Christian Phalange militia which started the civil war in 1975 and it was a Christian president who invited Syrian troops to restore order a year later. It was a Christian Maronite general, Michel Aoun, who declared himself president and began a hopeless war of "independence" against Syria. When the Pope visited Lebanon in May, he urged Christians to stay because, he promised, there would be liberty in the future. A likely story, the Maronites thought.

Emir Hares Chehab, general secretary of the Lebanese Islamic-Christian national dialogue committee, takes a more historic view. "We Lebanese Christians are Arabs and we were Christians here for 700 years before Arabs became Muslims. The church of Antioch was the first church of Christ. Since Muslims came here 14 centuries ago, we have lived in coexistence with them. But things are changing. If we are now few in number, Islam is different from what it used to be. Islam now has a character that comes from Pakistan and Indonesia and Malaysia and Africa. The Arabs are becoming a minority in Islam."

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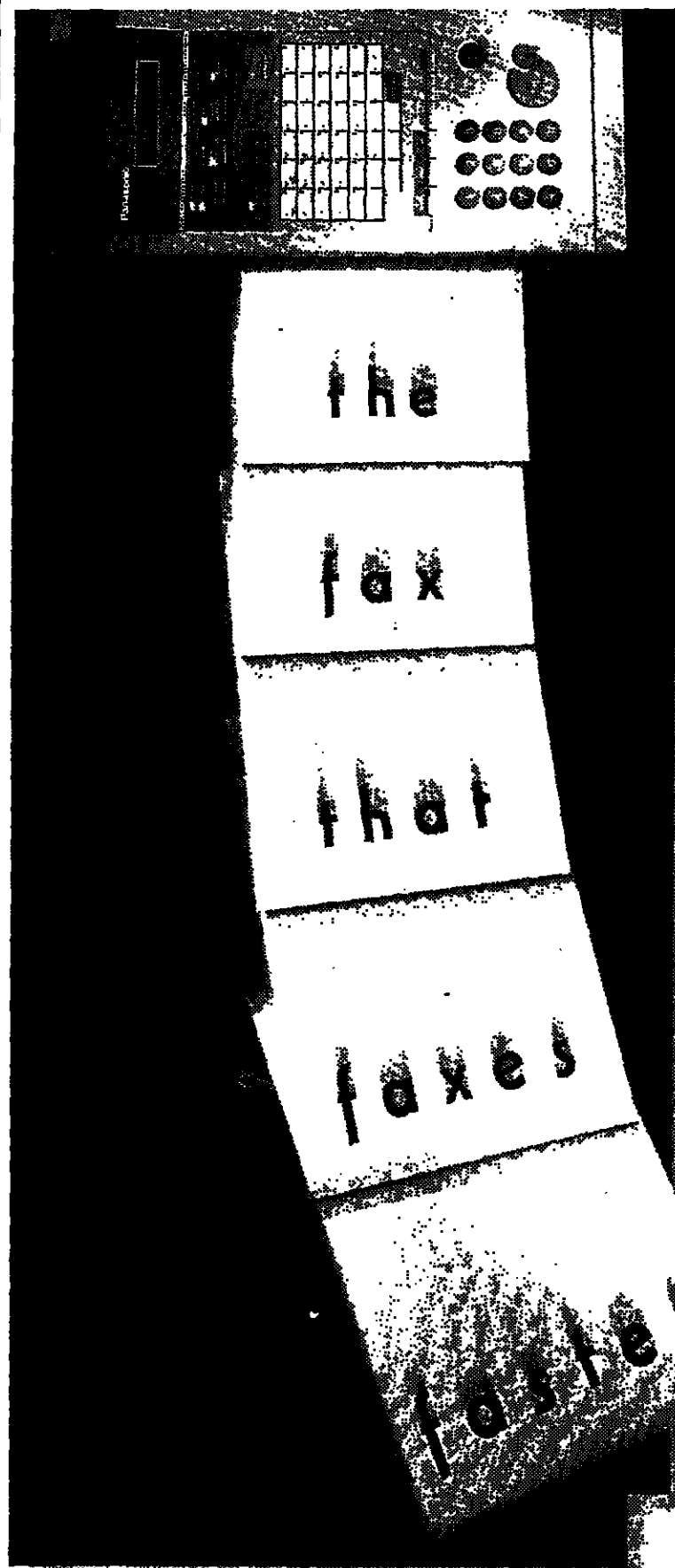
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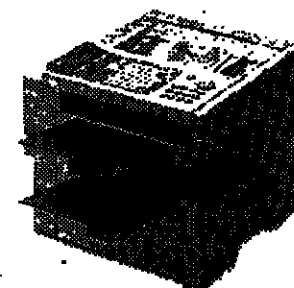
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Teachers' leaders alert MPs to recruitment crisis

Teachers' leaders from the state and independent sectors yesterday joined forces to impress upon the Government a growing crisis in recruitment to the profession.

As Baroness Blackstone, the higher education minister, was attempting to calm fears of a further decline with a promise of £10m designed to reduce the impact of tuition fees for trainee teachers, teaching associations were insisting a whole package of measures would be needed to reverse the downward spiral.

Their submissions, presented to a sub-committee of the Commons education and employment committee, bring together for the first time since the general election evidence of the scale of the problems which ministers acknowledge must be solved if their standards crusade is to succeed.

Teachers' leaders called for changes ranging from more rigorous entry criteria for initial teacher training courses to improved salary levels. The Head Masters' and Head Mistresses' Conference, representing independent schools, proposed a high-profile advertising campaign for the profession modelled on recruitment campaigns used by the armed forces.

According to figures from the teacher training agency, which oversees training and recruitment, significant vacancies remain on this year's courses in designated shortage sub-

jects such as modern languages, mathematics, information technology and design and technology.

Even in primary teacher training, where recruitment is considered less of a problem, applications for initial training are down by as much as 13 per cent this year compared with last.

There were increasing concerns over the quality of newly qualified teachers, the committee heard. John Sutton, General Secretary of the Secondary Heads' Association, said both quality and quantity have begun to decline in the past 18 months.

The National Primary Head Teachers' Association reported members' concerns that some teacher training institutions were reluctant to fail unsuitable candidates, and sometimes produced ambiguous references for trainees. University figures show that the average A-level points scored by entrants for undergraduate teacher training courses are the lowest in any major subject area.

Nick Jarman, an education consultant, is to take on the temporary management of Hackney's education service. His appointment follows a highly critical inspectors' report on the local education authority in the London borough. Mr Jarman, who has worked with a range of authorities throughout the country, will continue in the job until a permanent replacement is found.

Lucy Ward

Blunkett finds a way to ease university cuts

Universities will receive an extra £165m next year, David Blunkett, the Secretary of State for Education, announced yesterday. Judith Judd, Education Editor, explains that the money will come mainly from savings in the way loans are paid out to students.

New students will receive their loans in three instalments instead of a lump sum from next autumn, freeing up more funds for the universities.

The package will mean projected cuts of 2.7 per cent in university spending for next year will be kept to under 1 per cent, according to Baroness Blackstone, the higher education minister.

Universities have been urging the Government to let them keep tuition fees of £1,000 a year per student to be introduced from next year and amounting to around £150m in total. Ministers yesterday gave no guarantee that they would in future be able to keep the income. A fundamental review of all public spending is being carried out across Whitehall. But vice-chancellors welcomed the package as a step in the right direction.



Graduation day: Who will benefit from students' tuition fees?

Photograph: Sten Tonhig

Mr Blunkett said the extra money would help to improve poorer students' chances of going to college. "It ensures that universities do not face planned

cutbacks, while at the same time enabling more people to benefit from higher education."

The new funds include £125m to raise standards and to make

a start on the backlog of building maintenance and equipment replacement, estimated by researchers at around £400m. There will be a further £4m to

allow an extra 1,000 students to receive higher education through sub-degree programmes.

Part-time students and those facing particular hardship will benefit from an extra £36m, which will abolish means-testing for disabled students and introduce a £250 hardship loan.

Around one-third of students will not pay any fees because they come from families with gross incomes of less than £23,000. A further third will pay part of the fees.

Under the new arrangements, graduates will repay their loans over a longer period than at present. For those starting university next autumn the starting point for repayment will be an income of £10,000. Those earning £17,000 a year will repay £52 per month compared with up to £129 per month now.

Professor Martin Harris, chairman of the committee of vice-chancellors, pointed out that Sir Ron Dearing's report on higher education published in July said that universities faced a funding shortfall of £350m for next year. He said: "We welcome the Government's recognition that money from student contributions to tuition fees must be invested in higher education. There is still an urgent need for further investment in our universities if students are to get the teaching they deserve."

Mystery lights, file under X

Reports from a wide stretch of northern England and Scotland of strange glowing lights in the sky and a possible explosion left emergency services baffled yesterday.

Coastguards, police and the RAF began receiving calls from worried members of the public at 9am. The descriptions varied but included yellow, orange and white trails in the sky sometimes accompanied by the sound of whooshing or a loud explosion.

Sensors at the Geological Survey team in Edinburgh recorded some form of "sonic event" in the Moray Firth area. But extensive searches by RAF search and rescue helicopters, checks by coastguard and discussions with the experts at the American space agency Nasa failed to produce any explanation.

No civilian or military aircraft were reported missing or overdue and the Royal Astronomical Society and Nasa could not explain the phenomena. They were not aware of any stray matter in space heading towards the Earth.

Bill McFadyen, of Aberdeen Coastguard, said the calls came from Tyne Tees up along the Scottish coast to the southern tip of the Outer Hebrides and from well inland. "It's very unusual to have something on this scale all the way up the northern coast of Britain. It's a complete mystery to us. I get the feeling that there was a series of events. I would be surprised if it was just one large event."

A spokesman for RAF Kinloss said they had searched an area between Duns and Green-

law in the Borders after a suggestion that the lights were an aircraft, but found nothing. He added that there were similar reports from the Continent - in particular around Brussels - yesterday morning.

David Galloway, of the Geological Survey in Edinburgh, said a "sonic event" had registered on six of its seismometers at 9am. This would be caused normally by an aeroplane going supersonic or a meteorite or a satellite burning up. He suspected that the lights were a meteorite coming down, but which had vaporised on entering the Earth's atmosphere. He said reports of lights were probably exaggerated by atmospheric conditions which were amplifying whatever was out there.

— Louise Jury

Asprilla's friend guilty of possessing cocaine

An addict who bought cocaine with the help of £1,000 given to him by Faustino Asprilla, the footballer, was yesterday convicted of possessing the drug.

Leonel Sarmiento-Mottoa, 31, who befriended the Newcastle United striker after his arrival in Britain last year, was cleared at Southwark Crown Court of possessing cocaine with intent to supply.

Judge Peter Fingert remanded the defendant on bail until next Thursday for sen-

tence. But he warned Sarmiento-Mottoa that the almost inevitable outcome would be a prison sentence.

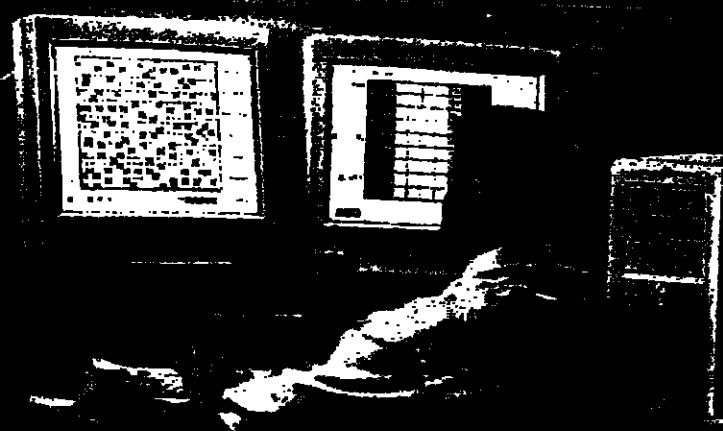
Asprilla told the court that he did not know the defendant was a cocaine addict or that he intended to spend the money he had given him on drugs.

Speaking through an interpreter, he told the jury he thought he was helping his fellow Colombian with accommodation problems after he was evicted from his home.

Sarmiento-Mottoa left court yesterday fighting back tears and said he was "too emotional" to speak.

Asprilla told the court how he got to know Sarmiento-Mottoa, a cleaner from north London, after his transfer to Tyne Tees from Parma in Italy. He told the jury: "He said to me that he had problems with his lodgings and he had to live in a hotel and he asked me for help to pay for it. I knew nothing at all about his drug taking."

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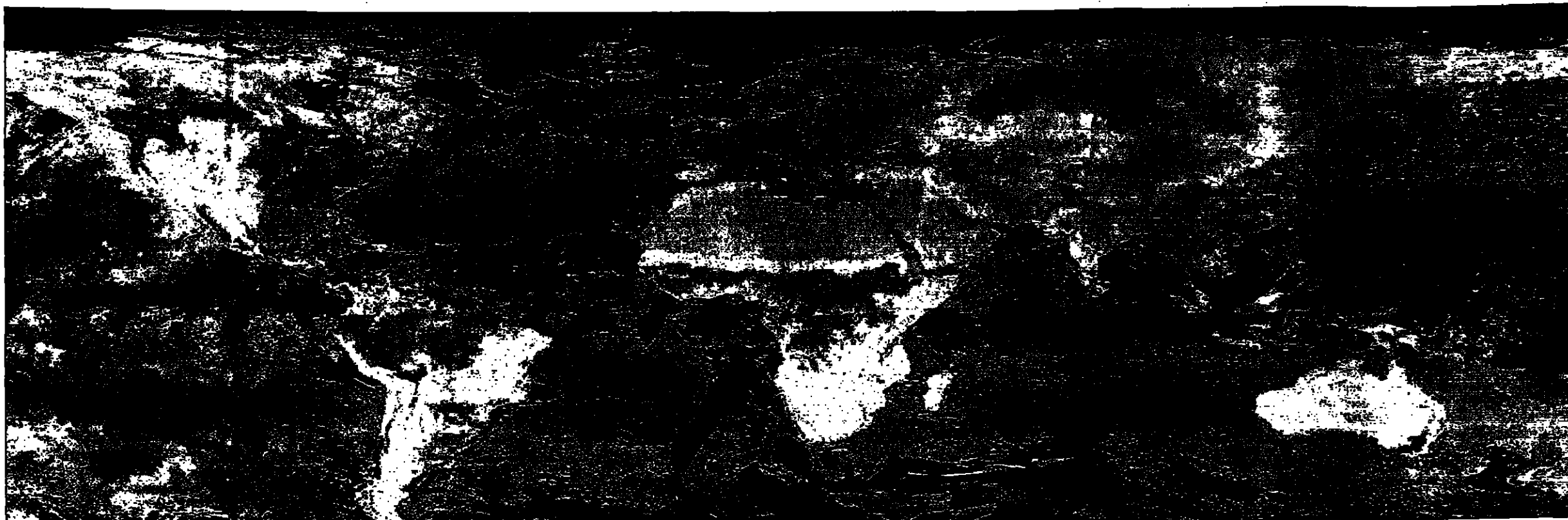
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France re
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Space-eye view: The tiny plankton that keep the Earth alive



Just another satellite image? No – this picture, taken last weekend, shows in minute detail the density of vegetation on land and in the oceans. Charles Arthur, Science Editor, explains how the blue patches, areas of plankton, stop our atmosphere becoming a sauna.

British and American scientists got their first views yesterday of new satellite data that will provide a vital insight into interactions between the atmosphere and the oceans, which cover the majority of the Earth's surface.

They hope it can help answer two essential questions troubling atmospheric scientists: how do the oceans and continents "breathe"? And, how important are the

oceans in regulating global warming caused by the build-up of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere?

The SeaStar satellite, launched by the US space agency Nasa on 1 August, uses state-of-the-art instruments to map the amount and colour of light reflected from the world's oceans.

Though the sea may look much the same colour from the ground, from space its

colour is largely determined by the amount of microscopic plant life – called phytoplankton – living close to the surface. SeaStar's instruments, can detect subtle variations in sea colour and interpret them in terms of density of plankton.

The study of plankton, a favourite food of fish and marine mammals such as whales, may seem esoteric. But the spread of this tiny organism, and of chlorophyll con-

tained in them, has a direct and crucial effect on global warming. As plankton proliferates, it takes up carbon dioxide from the sea and converts it into carbohydrates. The sea then makes up the imbalance by absorbing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere.

This simple system absorbs 5,000 billion tonnes (5 gigatonnes) of carbon from the atmosphere every year, and some of the car-

bon taken up by the plankton becomes fixed into deep-sea sediments and eventually rocks such as limestone. In this way, plankton are crucial to the regulation of global temperature.

SeaStar's data will be assessed at sites such as the Southampton Oceanography Centre and Plymouth Laboratory to see what they reveal about global vegetation patterns, both on land and in the oceans.

France revels in its cosmic power

The 100th Ariane rocket, jewel in the crown of the European space programme, will lift off from Guyana today. Once scorned, the French-led project is now the most commercially successful space programme in the world. Where does France – the second great power in the cosmos – (boldly) go from here? To Mars maybe, as John Lichfield reports.

the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (Nasa).

France wants radical changes in the European Space Agency (ESA), in which Britain plays a relatively small role (6.7 per cent of the budget, compared to 31 per cent for France and 25 per cent for Germany). Essentially, he wants most ESA projects delegated to groups of nations, like the successful Ariane programme. This might be awkward for aerospace companies in the junior partner countries like Britain.

Mr Allègre has also alarmed Washington by suggesting he

might abandon, or reduce, France's commitment to the grandiose scheme to build a permanent international orbiting space station. He believes the last, centre-right, French government made a mistake in allowing itself to be "tethered" to an American-led international space policy in this way.

In his opinion, manned space flight is not the last human frontier; it is a costly cul-de-sac. It is precisely because France and Europe limited itself to affordable, commercially useful, albeit old-fashioned, rocket launches that Ariane has been such a success. The Space Shuttle – even without the Challenger disaster – has proved an enormously costly exercise. Driven by military and industrial lobbies, it has produced few commercial, scientific or technological benefits.

"With the incidents on Mir, a lot of people have actually started to ask 'what exactly are they doing up there?'," Mr Allègre said in an interview with *L'Express* last week. "We are paying a lot of money to watch astronauts climb from one capsule to another."

(None the less, France's most experienced astronaut, General Jean-Loup Chrétien, 59, will go up with the Space Shuttle *Atlantis* tomorrow, in the latest mission to repair *Mir*).

Reading between the lines of Mr Allègre's interview – and comments by the new head of the French space centre, Gérard Brachet – France will not sever its links with the planned new international space station. It will take part in the station's construction but is refusing to commit itself to the manned space activities which will follow.

France will instead use its bargaining position with the US to seek a large role in the kind of unmanned, remotely-controlled space exploration which Mr Allègre believes will prove commercially and scientifically useful in developing the technologies of the future. In particular, France wants a share of the Martian action – for Europe, and especially for itself.

"It is unthinkable that we should be left out. That's the stuff of people's dreams," said Mr Allègre. "We aren't just going to sit back and watch the exploration of Mars."

All depends on the success of Ariane V, which is supposed to be capable of lifting complex vehicles into space – cheaply. If so, France hopes to persuade the US to send up new generations of American-European Martian probes from Guyana, not Florida. This may be asking a lot, but the days are gone when Americans laughed at French pretensions in space.

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The Russians no longer count. The Japanese and Chinese are not yet significant players. As the millennium ends, there are only two real powers in space. The first is hampered by statist considerations, romantic obsessions, special interest lobbies and political in-fighting. The other is commercially successful, oriented to the market, technically innovative and, under its new government, determined to be more of all three.

The first country is the United States; the second is France. The traditional earthly roles of the two countries are reversed, it seems, once you leave the atmosphere.

The 100th Ariane launch today is a political milestone. The Ariane programme – French-led, French based and 30 per cent French-funded – now holds 60 per cent of the world market in commercial satellite launches. Ariane makes a profit (although the wider French and European space programmes are a different story).

Technologically, there is an even more significant date for France and Europe next month with the second attempt to launch one of the new generation of Ariane V rockets. The first launch last June was a costly débâcle. If the new, much larger, technically advanced type of Ariane goes up successfully in mid-October, Europe will be set to dominate the commercial satellite-hoisting business into the next century.

Despite the Maastricht-enforced squeeze on public spending, the new Socialist-led government in France is deeply committed to its £1.2bn a year space programme (less than one-tenth the size of America's but three times as big as Russia's). The Minister for Education and Technology, Claude Allègre, is a geo-scientist of international renown. He believes it is time for France to assert its relative cosmic strength, within Europe and



Ariane: More cost-effective than the Shuttle project

Dirty drivers face spot fines of £60

Next year, motorists with filthy exhausts will face fixed-penalty fines of £60 in seven cities. But Nicholas Schoon, Environment Correspondent, says only a nationwide crackdown would be really effective.

One-tenth of vehicles cause half of all the air pollution from traffic, it has been estimated. And traffic fumes are the main reason why air-quality stan-

dards are regularly breached. That is why government has long been promising to crack down on the filthy minority of older, badly maintained vehicles producing exhaust fumes which fail to meet the legal standard.

Yesterday, ministers announced that from early next year seven local councils would be allowed to stop vehicles and issue fixed-penalty fines for those that failed emission tests. Accompanied by a police officer, trained smog-busting officials will carry out roadside tests.

The councils will not have to go to the expense of taking of-



A child getting a lungful of fumes in a city street. The Government aims to clean up the air we breathe with its pilot scheme of on-the-spot fines for drivers who flout the regulations for vehicle emissions, or who sit puffing out exhaust while parked
Photograph: John Lawrence

fenders to court - unless they refuse to pay. And the money raised from fines will go towards the cost of the staff and testing equipment needed to run the schemes. Even having an engine

running unnecessarily while parked will become an instantly punishable offence. If a driver of any car, however clean its exhaust, refuses to turn off an engine when reasonably asked to

do so, he or she will be ordered to pay £20.

The scheme will be run for a year by the city councils of Birmingham, Glasgow, Bristol, Swansea, Middlesbrough,

Canterbury and Westminster in London, who have all volunteered for a pilot project. If it is a success, all councils will be encouraged to join.

The £60 fine for a dirty ex-

haust - rising to £90 if still unpaid after a month - compares with a minimum speeding fine of £40. Diesel vehicles will be checked for the amount of soot in their fumes, while petrol engines will be tested for concentrations of key pollutants such as carbon monoxide. The tests will be the same as those carried out during the annual MoT road-worthiness check.

The Government insists that only uniformed police officers can actually stop vehicles for the checks, but police forces complain that they are too overstretched to take on new traffic

responsibilities. However, the Department of the Environment and Transport said that some of the money raised by the fines could be used to finance the police presence.

To date, most roadside checks on exhausts have been carried out by the Government's own vehicle inspectorate. The failure rate for cars is one in twenty; that for buses, heavy lorries and vans was lower but taxis were considerably dirtier - nearly one in ten did not meet the legal standard.

Until now, the chances of any driver being stopped for an emissions check have been extremely low. The schemes will be judged a success if they boost the number of checks and cut the number of failures in their localities. But it seems likely that only once checks are applied in towns and cities nationwide will the problem of the dirty minority be tackled and gains in air quality won.

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News Release

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NatWest continues its initiative to offer students and graduates help and advice on how to manage their finances effectively.

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David Bloomfield, Head of Student & Graduate Banking, said, "We are already providing advice to students while they are at university. This new move is a logical extension of our services to graduates, making the transition into the world of work much easier."

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New law redefines treasure trove

The new Treasure Act comes into force today replacing common-law precedents and practices dating back to the time of Richard the Lionheart.

Metal detector users are the main target. The country's 30,000 "detectorists" find most of the hundreds of thousands of ancient artefacts unearthed each year. But archaeologists worry that the portable past has not been properly protected or recorded.

The Act sets out a new definition of "treasure" - notably objects at least 300 years old containing a substantial amount of gold or silver, and hoards of coins. All finds must be reported within 14 days. Anyone failing to report a discovery risks a £5,000 fine, three months in jail or both.

When a museum wishes to acquire an item declared treasure by a coroner, the finder will be paid a reward based on

market value. In one of Britain's most lucrative finds, the Hoxne Hoard, discovered in Suffolk in 1992, a value of £1.75m was agreed. The 15,000 Roman coins and jewellery went to the British Museum.

The Act does away with the absurdity that an object could only be declared treasure trove - technically the property of the monarch - if it had been deliberately buried with the intention of recovery. This set a coroner's jury the tricky task of divining whether someone in the Middle Ages was trying to evade taxes or simply careless.

Mark Fisher, the arts minister, said the Act would ensure more items were properly recorded. Metal detector users have felt victimised by the legislation, but he said that "far from curtailing their activities", the Act would remove confusion.

— Stephen Goodwin

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11/PROFILE

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THE INDEPENDENT
WEDNESDAY
24 SEPTEMBER 1997

Aitken begins new chapter by turning to fiction

Jonathan Aitken, the disgraced former Cabinet minister once tipped for Downing Street, has turned his hand to writing a novel. Kim Sengupta looks at the life of the former Tory golden boy since his fall.

It has been three-and-a-half months since Jonathan Aitken's humiliating High Court defeat and the public opprobrium which followed. Now back from his self-imposed exile in the United States, he is writing a novel. The plot is meant to be a closely guarded secret, but some friends claim it is about a public figure brought down by the envy and cynicism of lesser men. They also say the prose is angry and fast and it is bound to be a bestseller.

Mr Aitken may have stopped trying to wield the "sword of truth" and picked up the pen, but there is a cloud over his road to rehabilitation as successful author - the little matter of the Scotland Yard inquiry into claims that he perjured himself during his libel case against *The Guardian* and Granada TV's *World in Action*.

The Independent has been told that a preliminary report has already been sent by the police to the Director of Public Prosecutions. Detectives have been gathering evidence in Britain and abroad, and although Mr Aitken has not been interviewed under caution yet, he soon will be.

Sources close to the investigation point out that alleged perjury arising from civil litigation is a complex prosecution, and they say they want to cover all the documentation, and speak to necessary parties, before tackling Mr Aitken. A full report would then be sent to the Crown Prosecution Service.

There is also the question of the massive legal bills from his court case. He has paid his own bill of around £800,000 but he is yet to pay the defendants' costs. He is believed to have told *The Guardian* he would make an offer in January.

The first chapters of his book are being typed up by his secretary, Lin, at the office adjacent to his home in Lord North Street, Westminster. The former Chief Secretary to the Treasury is dividing his time between London and the family home in Sandwich, Kent, which is owned by a Panamanian registered company.

POLITICIANS' BOOKSHELF

Lord Archer, former deputy chairman of the Conservative Party, reigns supreme. His thrillers, including *Kane and Abel* and *Not A Penny More, Not A Penny Less*, have sold more than 30 million copies world-wide. But *Edwina Currie* is catching up. Her Commons whodunnits, with raunchy characters and racy plots, sold in their millions. For her latest, *'She's Leaving Home'*, she received an advance of £300,000.

Michael Dobbs, (right) author of *'House of Cards'*, was just a moderately successful writer when television producers became interested in his political saga of naked ambition and greed. The TV serialisation of *'House of Cards'* more than doubled his earning potential.



Douglas Hurd, the former Foreign Secretary, wrote several successful thrillers in the mid-Seventies before his political career took over, and happily returned to writing after his resignation. In 1994 *Timothy Renton*, the former Tory Chief Whip during Thatcher's reign, published his debut novel, *'The Dangerous Edge'*, a potent mixture of Westminster power struggles and the kidnapping of two British aid workers in Beirut.

He apparently got most of his inspiration while walking alone in Scotland. He goes there every August for the grouse season. He does not shoot, but walks the glens.

Mr Aitken is an established author. His last book was a well reviewed biography of Richard Nixon. It was published by Weidenfeld, but they are not handling the latest book, and it is not known whether the manuscript has been placed with a publishing house yet.

According to friends, in the aftermath of his libel defeat, Mr Aitken wanted to write a factual book giving his version of the case. However, it was pointed out that by writing about it he risks the danger of entering into another libel action, this time as the defendant. A work of fiction was seen as the less risky option.

Following the collapse of the case, Mr Aitken's friends put forward a possible defence for his actions and in particular, the stay at Mohamed Al Fayed's Paris Ritz hotel where his version of events was discredited in court.

Part of the defence was that the then arms procurement minister, who has had links with MI6 in the past, was on secret government business which he could not talk about in court. It was also claimed he could have been let down by his wife Lolita over the payment of the hotel bill, which was proved to have been picked up by a Saudi prince.

Would all this be in the book? A friend of Mr Aitken said: "Look, I am sworn to

secrecy on the plot. But if Jonathan was indeed writing something loosely based on the fall of a public figure then it would be the ideal format to put the record straight.

"He is of course an experienced writer, and I am told this is very good stuff. It's straight from the heart, and quite racy. After all, he has had quite a colourful personal life." This

"colourful life" has included affairs with Antonia Fraser, Soraya Khashoggi, and Carol Thatcher, as well as a liaison with a prostitute.

After his High Court defeat, Mr Aitken wrote to Major John Thomas, the chairman of his constituency party in Thanet South, Kent, to apologise to party members. The two men have kept in touch since.

Major Thomas said yesterday: "I know that Jonathan has been writing away. I am sure the book will be very good. We still have not selected a candidate at Thanet South, and although there is a lot of sympathy for Jonathan it is doubtful if it would be him this time around.

"Writing the book is a way back towards normal life for him. Whether he returns to public life or not would depend very much on what happens with the perjury case. If he stands trial and is acquitted then that's fine. If he is found guilty, of course..."

One person apparently not taking any interest in Mr Aitken's writing is his wife. The couple are said to have led separate lives for a long time but after the court case Lolita said she was going to stand by him. But now, it is reported, she is living in Paris. There are, however, said to be no immediate plans for a divorce.



Jonathan Aitken: His novel is said to be about a public figure brought down by lesser men Photograph: Dillon Bryden

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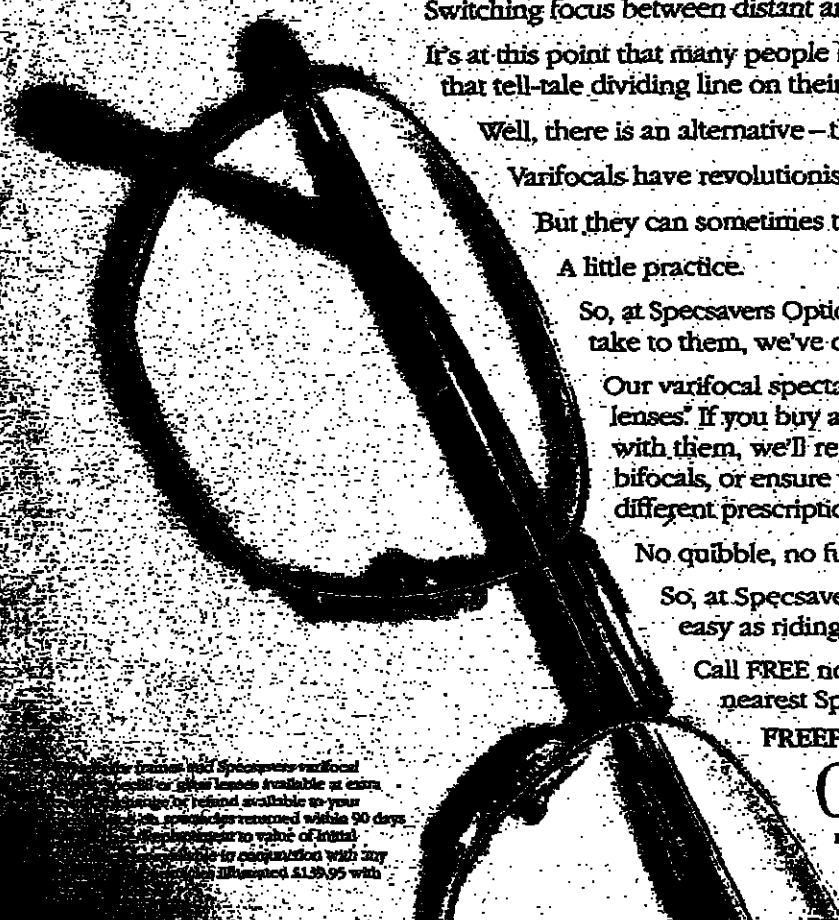
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12/WORLD NEWS

Yeltsin sees wider role for the state

President Boris Yeltsin is likely to announce an increased role for the state in Russia's economy when he addresses the upper chamber of parliament today.

A Kremlin source said Mr Yeltsin was likely to say the state intended to take some of the most vital areas under its control. The source said the president's speech would stress that the free market had been instrumental in breaking away from the Soviet centrally planned economy but that the time had come to introduce new rules.

Reuters

Peace troops demo

Angry Bosnian Serbs threw Molotov cocktails at Nato-led peacekeeping troops and set a bus on fire outside the north Bosnian town of Doboj yesterday, hours after hardliners lost another town in the area.

Police loyal to Bosnian Serb president Biljana Plavsic yesterday took control of a police station at Prijedor which was controlled by hardline nationalists during the Bosnian war. The crowd in Doboj were demanding the removal of a checkpoint set up by the Nato-led Stabilisation Force north of the town.

Reuters

Circumcision plea

A US doctor called yesterday for universal circumcision in Europe, saying the health benefits outweighed any of the complications.

Dr Edgar Schoen, of the Kaiser Foundation Research Institute in Oakland, California, said circumcision offered increased protection against urinary tract infections, cancer of the penis, and sexually transmitted diseases such as Aids.

Reuters

Will there be life after Arafat?

When Yasser Arafat fainted at the Arab League conference in Cairo last weekend he triggered fresh speculation among Palestinians and Israelis about who would replace him if he died. The answer, it became clear, was that he has no clear successor. Patrick Cockburn examines the Palestinian leader's remarkable hold over his people.

His aides say robustly that "he is as strong as a horse", but since Yasser Arafat injured his head when his plane crashed in a sandstorm in Libya in 1992 he has suffered from black-outs. In recent weeks, as the stalemate in negotiations with Israel continues, he has looked increasingly haggard and depressed.

If Mr Arafat does die, he has no obvious successor as either Palestinian leader or national symbol. Even at the nadir of his fortunes, after his expulsion from Beirut by Israel in 1982, attempts to replace him have never looked like succeeding.

The only two Palestinian leaders who approached him in

prestige have both been assassinated in the last 10 years. Khalil Wazir (Abu Jihad) was killed by an Israeli team in Tunis in 1988. Salah Khalaf (Abu Iyad) was killed three years later by one of his own bodyguards working for Abu Nidal, the Palestinian guerrilla leader.

Constitutionally Mr Arafat should be replaced — though he himself apparently disputes this — by Ahmed Qureia (Abu Ala) the speaker of the Palestinian parliament. There would then be a presidential election. A candidate favoured by the US and Israel is Abu Mazen, the negotiator of the Oslo accords, but neither he nor Abu Ala are popular figures.

Mr Arafat would also be difficult to replace because he is the only member of the leadership in exile in Tunis, which returned to Gaza in 1994, who was acceptable to the 2.5 million Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza.

The same division between "outsiders" and "insiders" also probably disqualifies Faisal Husseini and Hanan Ashrawi, both of whom are popular. The most likely development, in the short term, would be a collective leadership of politicians and security men, with neither predominating.

It is not easy to run a resis-



Great survivor: Yasser Arafat's rivals as leader of the Palestinians have either been assassinated or out-manoeuvred. Photograph: Brian Harris

tance movement in the Middle East. The main Iranian opposition to the Iranian regime, for example, has ended up as a cat's paw of Saddam Hussein, the Iraqi leader. In contrast the Palestinian leader has avoided

becoming anybody's pawn. Though dictatorial, he is not bloodthirsty, never eliminating his Palestinian opponents. Mr Arafat's career has been studded with defeats, but he has usually played with a weaker

hand than his opponents. His ability to recuperate stems from his refusal to go against the stream of Palestinian opinion, whatever the urgings of Washington and the rest of the world.

Smoke-pall danger over Sarawak

Smoke haze over the state of Sarawak, Borneo, hit record danger levels as firefighters raced to control the forest fires in neighbouring Indonesia which are responsible for the smog.

The national Bernama news agency said that 2,000 fire-fighters from Malaysia, including medical and communication experts, were leaving for Indonesia in stages to help put out the fires. Mohamad Rahmat, the Information Minister, said that evacuation of the 2 million people who live in Sarawak would be a last resort.

Reuters

Hitler's wage slaves

A Bonn court is to decide today whether 21 elderly Jewish women should be paid for working as part of Adolf Hitler's vast army of Second World War slaves.

The ruling could open the gates to a flood of claims by some of the 12 million slaves that Hitler's armaments minister, Albert Speer, put to work across Nazi-occupied Europe, lawyers said.

About 1.5 million former slave labourers under the Nazi regime still live in eastern Europe.

Reuters

Greeks turn turtle

Restaurants specialising in turtle soup may have to do without their main ingredient after Greek forestry officials freed 423 restaurant-bound tortoises near the northern city of Salonica.

The animals were illegally taken from various parts of Greece by two unidentified foreigners who intended to sell them to eastern-European restaurants.

Associated Press

Bankers tremble as Li takes a leaf out of Mao's red book

Just when everyone thought that China had signed up to the new market-oriented world order, premier Li Peng has shown that the old Maoist values are not dead. Stephen Vines in Hong Kong observed him berating the luminaries of the IMF and World Bank about the evils of imperialism and the bullying of the weak by the wealthy.

In his keynote address Mr Li spoke of how developing countries had "freed themselves from imperialist and colonialist domination and won national liberation after centuries of foreign oppression and enslavement".

His words sent a tremor down the spines of the assembled central bankers and finance officials who, the previous day, had given a rousing reception to Zhu Rongji, Mr Li's heir-apparent, as he weaved his way through the vocabulary they are more accustomed to hearing. The dour but sharp Mr Zhu reeled off money supply and debt ratio figures, spoke enthusiastically about economic reform and generally gave the impression that China was happily heading down the capitalist road.

Mr Li, by contrast, was merely dour. Delivering his speech in exactly the same way he addressed the just completed 15th congress of the Communist Party in Peking, he warned the big powers that "in no circumstances should any country be allowed to impose its social system and ideology on others".

Recycling the rhetoric of the

supposedly faded Maoist era Mr Li said that developing countries had "smashed the monopoly of world affairs by a few countries and lent a powerful push behind the movement towards a multipolar world".

China, the world's biggest recipient of development aid, does not, in Mr Li's eyes, see itself as a supplicant. "Economic assistance must not be attached with any political conditions," he sternly warned would-be donors. "Such practices as bullying the weaker or less fortunate by dint of one's power or wealth should not go unchecked."

In what sounded to many like a reference to China's perennial struggle with the United States to obtain Most Favoured Nation (MFN) trading status, he said countries could not "be allowed to impose sanctions, or threaten to do so at every turn".

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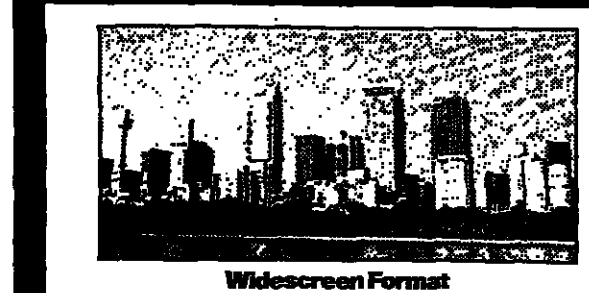


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Blacks chip away at monuments to Afrikaner power



Potent symbol: Graffiti appeared on the statue of Steve Biko hours after it was unveiled. Photograph: Sean Woods

Monuments come and monuments go as the new South Africa struggles to forge a common cultural identity. Three years after the ANC came to power not everyone wants to party on the National Heritage annual holiday. Mary Braid finds out why.

The towering bronze statue of the late Steve Biko did not remain unscathed for long. Just hours after it was unveiled by President Nelson Mandela, the signature of the AWP, the right-wing Afrikaner paramilitary organisation, was spray painted at the feet of the liberation hero.

The timing made it a particularly vicious act. For as

Biko's image was being defaced the Truth and Reconciliation Commission was hearing the testimony of five security policemen who have confessed to causing his death 20 years ago. Now its threats that blood would flow before Afrikaners relinquished power have come to nothing, the extreme right seems to have turned towards more petty forms of resistance.

Mr Biko's memorial, unveiled earlier this month, is part of what Themba Makashe, an arts ministry director, describes as the levelling of South Africa's lopsided heritage, a cultural terrain, which after four decades of Afrikaner nationalism, is still carpeted with monuments and memorials to "Volk" heroes and dead National Party presidents.

"There was a time when you drove through this country and looked at what was preserved and you would never have

guessed you were in an African country," says Mr Makashe, who is at the forefront of the campaign to redefine South African culture. It is a delicate business because the resentment of the deposed, as the rare act of vandalism shows, simmers just beneath the surface.

As Biko went up this month, John Vorster, the late former National Party leader, came down. On Monday, his bust, overshadowing the entrance to the notorious Johannesburg police station which took his name, was removed to a police museum in Pretoria to claps and sarcastic shouts of "go well" from a crowd.

Today, to mark National Heritage Day, the John Vorster tower block, from which a succession of black activists "fell", will be renamed Johannesburg Central.

But such removals have been few. The ANC is deliberately tip-

toeing through the cultural minefield. In the interests of reconciliation the President has opposed wholesale toppling of the symbols of the past.

In the early days, some blacks wanted to storm Pretoria's austere Voortrekker Monument, erected as testament to the Afrikaners' conviction that they were God's chosen people. Today, many blacks still believe there has been too much pussy-footing around. This week the grandson of Enoch Sontonga, composer of the liberation anthem "Nkosi Sikelel iAfrica", said it was time for the music to stand alone as the National Anthem and that the Afrikaners' "Die Stem", which was tagged on for the sake of unity, be dropped.

But, so far, that has not been the ANC way. In parliament, portraits of the old NP leaders have been removed from the main foyer but they have been

rehung in siderooms. And although there have been provincial skirmishes over the removal of busts of Hendrik Verwoerd, apartheid's architect, most Afrikaner symbols have been left alone. Most remarkable perhaps, there has been no mass manufacture of Mandela statues and attempt to make a cult of his personality.

Instead the government is simply adding to a past it may detest but accepts; resurrecting black writers like Sol Plaatje and honouring black heroes.

Today, President Mandela opens Robben Island as a national monument, and the island on which he was imprisoned for much of his 27-year incarceration will take its place alongside the Voortrekker.

But the right wing and Afrikaner cultural organisations which have mushroomed since 1994 seem unmoved by the softly softly approach. They

argue that while their symbols survive they are under constant threat and that their culture is wilting as schools and universities are forced to forsake Afrikaans for English. Yesterday the National Party said it still supported Heritage Day, the holiday introduced after the country's first democratic elections. But their support is hardly wholehearted. And while they condemn Biko's defacers, the Freedom Front and Conservative parties, further to the Afrikaner right, can see nothing to celebrate.

They admit that President Mandela has offered their culture some protection, but insist the pressure will increase once the "Great Reconciler" goes. "You don't throw a frog in boiling water," says Freedom Front MP Dr Pieter Mulder. "He would jump right out again. You put him in cold and slowly turn the temperature up."



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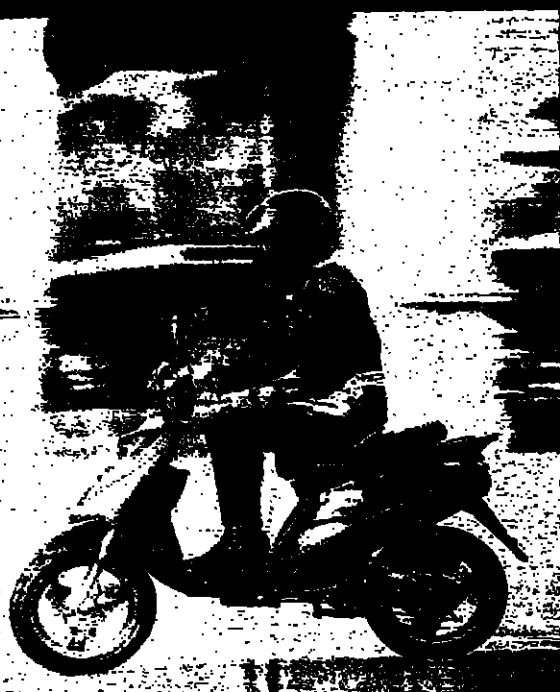
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14/LIB DEM CONFERENCE

Ludicrous examples of Labour secrecy: an MP's challenge

New government, same old secrecy: details of surgeons' charges in the 1920s, a hazardous road bridge and even an 18th-century map are among the documents still kept from public view. *Fran Abrams, Political Correspondent, recounts a Liberal Democrat MP's fight for open government.*

There are limits to the Government's commitment to freedom of information, it seems. Even after promises of a new law to bring greater openness, some documents are still so sensitive they must remain secret many years on.

Taxi drivers carrying fares without depressing flags, 1935-1951. "Dangerous driving conditions at hump-backed bridge on Beckenham Road London, 1935-1951." "Police fees for sur-

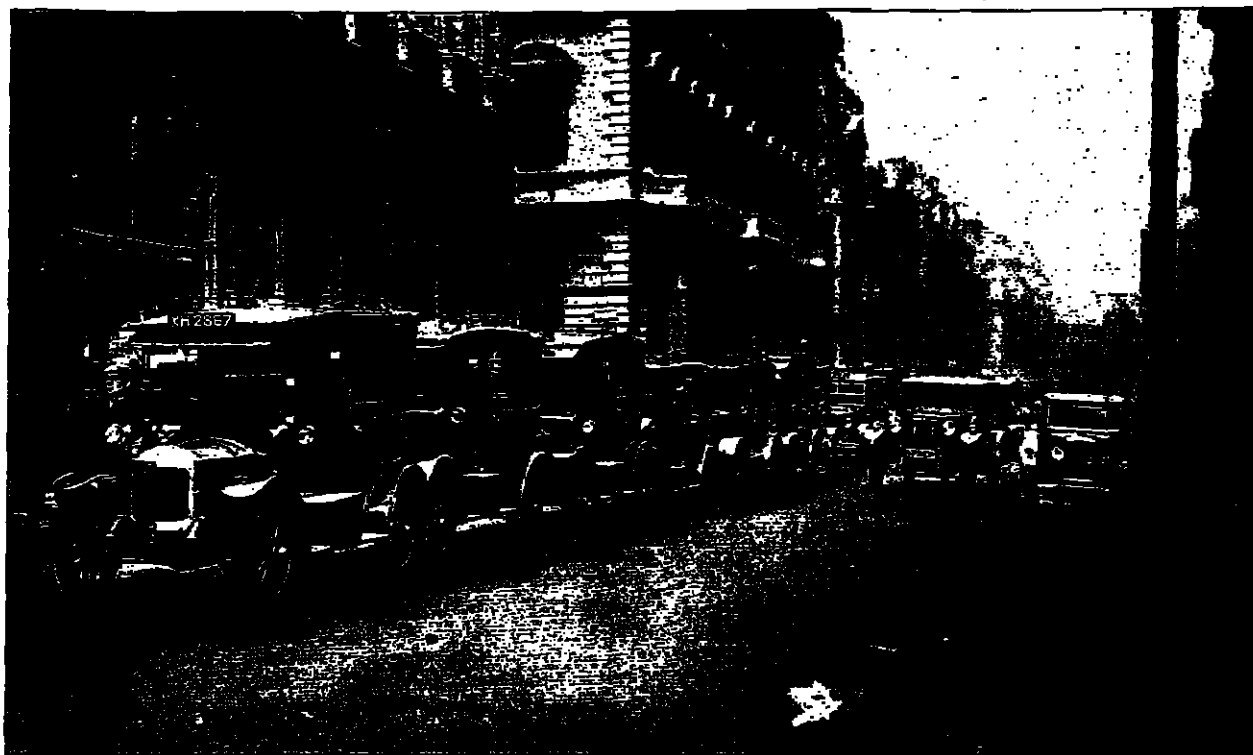
geons 1926-1953." The release of these documents could lead to distress and even danger for police surgeons, taxi drivers and their descendants, the Cabinet Office minister Peter Kilfoyle has decided.

Mr Kilfoyle promised to look into the issue after Norman Baker, Liberal Democrat MP for Lewes, raised it in a Commons debate. But after investigations he has told the MP they cannot be released.

"All these files remain closed by Lord Chancellor's instrument as they contain information which could cause substantial distress (or endangerment from a third party) to the persons affected by their disclosure or their descendants," he has said in a letter to Mr Baker.

The MP is not impressed. "Who were these taxi drivers carrying?" he asks. "M15 agents? Even if they were, why not just block out their names?"

Mr Kilfoyle has confirmed that the files remain closed not for reasons of national security



Closed ranks: Files on taxis carrying fares 'without depressing flags', 1935-52, remain classified Photograph: Hulton Getty

but of "personal sensitivity". Mr Baker says there is a serious lesson to be learnt from this exchange with the minister.

"Here is the first test of this government's commitment to freedom of information. It is on something innocuous and yet they are blocking it," he says. Mr Baker intends to appeal

to the Lord Chancellor's committee responsible for reviewing closed documents to see if he can get the decision reversed.

The MP will also raise the issue again when he lodges a Private Member's Bill on freedom of information next January. He wants the number of years for which documents are

closed reduced from 30 years to 20 but adds that the Government must also tackle a culture of secrecy which still pervades Whitehall.

Yesterday, the Lord Chancellor's department would only refer *The Independent* to the individual departments holding the documents. The oldest

closed document held by the Department of Environment is a map of the River Dee from 1771.

A Home Office spokeswoman said the files might be less innocuous than they appeared. For example, the police surgeons' papers might contain details of medical records.

Plans for promotion of women rejected

Plans for positive discrimination to put more women on Liberal Democrat shortlists for Westminster seats were rejected yesterday, despite the support of the party leader, Paddy Ashdown.

Representatives also voted against similar proposals to put more women on internal committees but agreed that shortlists for European Parliament elections in 1999 would have 50 per cent women on them.

The rejected proposals, which meant ensuring that all parliamentary shortlists were at least 50 per cent female, provoked a fierce debate. The conference appeared to be evenly divided but the plans needed a two-thirds majority in order to be passed.

Richard Burt, a councillor from Dudley, said the moves would put discrimination into Liberal Democrat rules. "I was unfortunate enough to experience the identical changes in the Labour Party four years ago... It was a disaster."

Baroness Williams of Crosby, supporting the measures, said people would not vote for the Liberal Democrats if they thought they were not "playing fair between men and women."

"If the conference rejected the measures it would be telling them that the Liberal Democrats were not prepared to move on an issue which was crucial to our times."

— Fran Abrams

MacLennan's proud boast: 'Free to think dangerously'

The Liberal Democrats yesterday stepped up their attacks on Labour, with the party's president offering Tony Blair 'wardrobes' full of policies. *Anthony Bevis, Political Editor, reports.*

Robert MacLennan, the Liberal Democrats' president, won a rare cheer of approval from rank and file representatives yesterday with a description of a Labour government devoid of substance and ideas.

With sections of the party exceedingly concerned that Paddy Ashdown is allowing the Liberal Democrats to be swallowed up by Labour, the leadership spent the day trying to mark out the independence of their territory.

They were helped by the intervention of Peter Mandelson,

minister without portfolio, who used a newspaper article to warn Mr Ashdown that he was playing a dangerous game if he was serious about working with Labour while making "invalid criticisms" of government spending policy.

Mr Ashdown, who addresses the conference today told *The Independent* that he was "seriously relaxed" about the Mandelson intervention, saying: "I am delighted that people are beginning to understand, some more perfectly than others, what constructive opposition is about. There seem to be some in the Labour Party who still believe that constructive opposition is compliant opposition. It isn't, and it isn't going to be."

The independent spirit of the Liberal Democrat tradition was superbly carved out by Mr MacLennan, who told the conference that the party of ideas and abundant policy could help fill the Labour vacuum. If

Labour wanted to steal the clothes of Liberal Democrat policy, he said, "we have wardrobes of clothes".

Mr MacLennan said Labour had won the election without much of a policy but with a vagueness sold with brilliance. "Labour offered a sort of bravura vacuum — everything was 'new', 'exciting', 'challenging', 'modern'. Four adjectives in search of a noun. Four attitudes looking for substance." But he warned that a complex world would not be met by saying those four words ever again. There had to be the equivalent of Beveridge reports.

"The swan gliding over the water is lovely, but somebody has to do the feet. We are the party of the pamphlet, the working party, the report, the debate on the report."

"If you prick us we bleed ink — ink and ideas. Lots of us write. Many of us can read. We can also think because we are free

to be outrageous. Not being part of government, we can think dangerously."

Mr MacLennan said the Liberal Democrats should become a powerhouse of political ideas.

However, he did not confine his criticism to Labour. He said that perhaps the Tory party was over. "The idea that the Conservatives might never govern again is seriously argued," he said. "The possibility that they might decline into an ideologically pure, burning bright English nationalist party is perfectly thinkable."

Last night, Malcolm Bruce, the party's Treasury spokesman, reluctantly accepted part of the Government's own conclusion on the timetable for the single currency. Having previously preferred a 1999, first-wave entry for sterling, Mr Bruce told a Confederation of British Industry fringe meeting in Eastbourne that that now seemed "increasingly unlikely".

It's unwise to push Pinocchio too far

The small, craggy-featured man in the immaculate white shirt who sat down next to me at breakfast yesterday was ominously newspaperless — and thus in search of a conversation. He found it with the melancholic young man on the other side of the table. Time was, he told the young man in the accents of Lancashire, when the Liberal Democrats would only have held their conferences in Brighton or Blackpool. But as his party became more successful (he continued, uninterrupted), so it varied its venues. It now travelled to Harrogate, Bournemouth — to any place in fact where the Liberals now had representatives. Each in his view (the mournful youth was gazing out of the window) had its own particular strengths and weaknesses, which he happily enumerated in some detail.

Such, then, is the mood in Eastbourne, occasioned by the Lib Dems best election results since Magna Carta. With 46 MPs, they are chippy, confident, they even swagger a little. As a party, they remind one of a nice, ordinary-looking, slightly nerdy male student (computer studies and politics) who has just scored after the rag ball. No matter that the girl was drunk at the time, or on the rebound after a bad relationship with a Hooray Henry, he now feels himself to be in a position to advise others on the arts of love.

And no one is the target of more such advice than that electoral Romeo, Tony Blair. Whenever he is spoken about in public here, it is in plying or patronising tones. He has — they all agree — no guiding ideology, no strategy, no roots.

SKETCH
BY DAVID
AARONOVITCH

no great principles, but rather dashes from decision to decision with manic good intention.

This is the image of Blair as a political Pinocchio, a bouncing marionette with a painted smile, full of enthusiasm but seduced by any passing, glittering diversion. If ever Blair is to become — in Lib Dem terms — a real boy, then he will need to be guarded by an external conscience, admonished should he set off arm in arm with the wicked fox of power and the wedding cat of opportunism.

Few qualify better for the role of Jimmy Cricket, sent by Providence to guide the puppet's steps, than the soft-spoken Robert MacLennan, the Liberal Democrat president. Lacking only an old top hat and a furled umbrella, Jimmy MacLennan hopped up to the rostrum and warned Pinocchio of the dangers of inconstancy and lack of attention to detail. "The swan gliding over the water looks lovely," he chirruped sagely, "but someone has to do the feet". How amusing. How true.

It was a beautiful speech which elegantly reminded his listeners in the hall that they were hugely superior in wisdom and morality to everyone else on the planet, and that their one possible fault was excessive modesty. Everything that was good about New Labour had first been Liberal Democrat, the only problem being that Labour could never catch up, because, being very radical, the Lib Dems were always changing.

But what happens, I wonder, if Pinocchio gets a bit fed up with all this Polonian counsel, and tells Jimmy Cricket to take a running jump? Or, to put it another way, does not the role of effective conscience demand a certain circumspection, a level of friendly discretion?

That is not their way, alas. Back at the breakfast table, Mr Craggy was still going strong. "Eventually I'd like to see us go to Aberdeen," he was telling his over-polite, despairing young neighbour as I got up to go. Sometimes, so would I.

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Hague seeks clear mandate for Tory party shake-up

William Hague, his sights on victory in the Tory leadership ballot, yesterday outlined his plans for party reform, and sharing a bedroom with his fiancée at the party conference. **Colin Brown, Chief Political Correspondent, says he could be making a rod for his own back.**

William Hague said yesterday that he needed "a lot more than a narrow victory" to secure a mandate for leadership and reform of the Conservative Party.

His remarks on BBC radio show confidence that he will win a majority, but could leave him open to attack if it is less than a convincing result after coming under withering fire from all sides.

Mr Hague is facing a rebellion by grassroots members

who are demanding a say in leadership elections, and criticism from Tory grandees including Alan Clark, who fear he is taking too much power away from MPs.

Mr Hague brushed aside objections raised by Baroness Thatcher and the Tory old guard who have raised eyebrows about his sharing a bedroom with his fiancée, Fiona Jenkins, at the party conference in Blackpool, before they are married. Pressed to say whether

it was a double bed, Mr Hague invited the Radio Five Live interviewer, Sybil Ross, into his bedroom. "Come and have a look if you like," he said. When it was suggested that his offer would be taken up by newspapers, he said: "It was a personal invitation."

The Tory leader has encountered almost daily attacks on his tour of the country to build up support for his leadership and planned reforms to the party. Yesterday he sampled

a curry in Birmingham before telling local Asian businessmen about his reforms. Today, he will be in Salisbury.

But it emerged yesterday he could have spent the time enjoying a drink and a doze in the sunshine with John Major and the former Hong Kong governor, Chris Patten, at the home of ex-Tory MP Tristan Garel-Jones in Spain.

He was invited to join the former prime minister on a holiday in Spain but turned him

down because he was too busy campaigning for a "yes" vote in the membership ballot.

There were suspicions at Westminster, as reported in *The Independent* on Saturday, that the trio of old pals may have been plotting Mr Hague's downfall in the olive groves of Candeleda, a village west of the Spanish capital, Madrid.

Friends of Mr Major, who say the new Tory leader and his predecessor are "quite close", say Mr Hague was invited to

join in the holiday fun, but turned the offer down.

The former prime minister is "fully behind" Mr Hague, they say, and reject the idea of any secret plot to undermine the Tory leader. "He regards the idea that this is some sort of cabal as daft. This is a long planned holiday which Mr Hague was invited to join, but couldn't because he had his huge regional tour," a source said. *The Independent* reported yesterday that Mr Major will

give his backing to Mr Hague minutes before the results of the ballot are released.

Lady Thatcher will also lend her support later in the week, when Mr Major has left for a speaking engagement in America.

Mr Hague's shadow cabinet colleagues were stung in activity yesterday, issuing more press releases than they have all summer, after being accused in the media of being a bunch of unknowns.

Labour councillors face suspension

Allegations of corruption have swept through Labour councils across the country in the past few months. **Christine Wolmar previews a report, to be discussed by the party's National Executive Committee, on damaging charges faced by Labour councillors in Glasgow.**

Labour is expected to take tough action against nine Glasgow councillors accused of bringing the party into disrepute over allegations of junketing and misusing a council fund.

A report on the allegations is due to be presented today to Labour's ruling National Executive Committee and is expected to show that there was widespread abuse in Glasgow of the way that conference trips and other visits were allocated to councillors.

It will also say that a special fund, the Common Good Fund, which is under the control of the provost, (the equivalent of mayor south of the border) was misused because it was used to

allow councillors to go on trips. The report is deeply critical of the whole management of the Labour-controlled council.

The report is based on interviews by a team of investigators with 37 of Labour's 75 councillors, but the publication of the report was delayed to ensure it did not interfere with the devolution vote.

Four councillors - Pat Lally, the provost, Bob Gould, the leader, Alex Mosson, the Deputy Provost, and Gordon MacDiarmid, the deputy leader - are all likely to be recommended for suspension. Five other councillors, who do not hold senior positions on the council, are likely to be recommended for expulsion.

Charges of bringing the party into disrepute are likely to be drawn up against all nine and passed to the party's national constitutional committee which will decide what action to take.

Firm action is assured. Tony Blair is anxious to show that Labour will not tolerate sleaze in its ranks. Similar action is likely to be taken against Labour councillors in Doncaster where investigations are being carried out by the police, the Labour party, the district auditor and the council itself.



Sea storms: Campaigners at the High Court yesterday where they were trying to force a judicial review of the Government's granting of licences for oil exploration in the Atlantic. They say rare coral is endangered. Photograph: Rui Xavier

Brown reignites Cabinet pay row

Two Cabinet ministers broke ranks and indicated that they would get a pay rise next year. **Colin Brown, explains how John Prescott is trying to defuse the issue.**

The Cabinet yesterday looked set to get an increase in pay after two ministers said that part of their £16,000 rise would be paid in stages, in spite of a renewed call for restraint by the Chancellor, Gordon Brown.

Robin Cook, the Foreign Secretary, said: "The position is clear, that the Cabinet has agreed we should not take the full pay increase, that it should be deferred and that John Prescott [Deputy Prime Minister] and others should look at how it is phased and staged in."

David Blunkett, the Secretary of State for Education and Employment, said that Mr Prescott would find a consensus for this year's pay rise, but a decision on next year's pay settlement should not be reached until the next report by the senior salaries review body. It is expected that the rise from

April will be limited to the rise for nurses and most other public-sector workers.

Mr Prescott was sounding out Cabinet colleagues on plans for defusing the row, including the possibility of linking future pay rises to those for civil servants, when news broke that Mr Brown had waded back into the row. "I have insisted that, across the board, public-sector pay settlements must be guided by fairness and fairness," Mr Brown said. His reference to "across the board" was seen as a rebuke to Cabinet ministers still squabbling over their rises.

Cabinet sources confirmed yesterday that they were extremely angry both about being "bounced" into forgoing the pay rises by the Prime Minister and the Chancellor, and about the way it was handled.

Mr Prescott was given the task of peace-maker by the Prime Minister, and began consulting colleagues last week by telephone. The deputy Prime Minister did another ring-around of the Cabinet on Monday night.

Mr Prescott is concerned that unless the Cabinet accepts a hike in pay at some stage, they could be overtaken by their junior ministers.

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Grand old lady of Paris comes to the London stage

Next week, the Comédie Française will spearhead a French invasion of British theatreland that will last until Christmas. Here we present a portrait in words and pictures of the oldest national theatre company in the world, not seen in London since 1973. Philippe Tesson, theatre critic of *Le Figaro*, looks at the company's 300-year history

The Comédie Française is a very old lady whose main function is to bear witness to the three centuries that made the French theatre's glory. It is commissioned to keep alive, with a duty of excellence, the national repertoire of which Molière, Racine, Marivaux are the prestigious emblems.

But, like all old ladies, she

has her own coquetties and sometimes gives way to audacities more likely to be found in a young girl's character. She puts on Genet, she plays Corneille in the "destroy" style or Offenbach, in the manner of a boulevard play. She can even be eccentric. But there is no harm in her being an object of scandal for real theatre and real life are worth that price. And anyway, the Comédie Française always lands on her dignity.

For she is a national property, like the Château de Versailles, *cog au vin* or Napoleon's hat. The French keep a jealous eye on her. Created by Louis XIV, she sailed through the monarchy, the Revolution, the Empire and the Republics without any infringement of her privileged status as a public institution. She imperturbably holds out against History. The most market-oriented economists would not dare try to turn her into a private enterprise.

The Comédie Française is actually the only issue on which the French can never disagree.

By appointment to the Sun King

Founded in 1680 by Louis XIV himself, the Comédie Française originally held a royal monopoly on all theatre in the French language.

For nearly a century, it performed in a converted *jeu de paume* (a kind of tennis court) in the rue Fosses-Saint-Germain. It then moved to the Salles des Machines at the Tuileries and in 1789 was granted a new theatre - later renamed the Odéon - near the Luxembourg Gardens on Paris's left bank. After the French Revolution, the company briefly split into two groups: the conservatives and the liberals. The con-

servatives stayed at the Odéon, while the liberals moved to the rue de Richelieu. In 1799, the company reunited at the latter address, where it operates today.

As the Société des Comédiens-Français, the company's actors are employed under titles of great formality, and today number 34 sociétaires and 27 pensionnaires. Past members include such luminaries of the French stage as Rachel, Sarah Bernhardt, Jean-Louis Barault, and Madeleine Renaud.

While the Comédie Française is best known for its rich productions of the classical French repertoire, its annexa-

tion of the Théâtre du Vieux-Colombier and addition of a Studio Theatre have led to a new flexibility in mixing old and new across the three venues.

For the company's first visit to London in over 20 years, however, and to launch the 12-week French Theatre season, Jean-Pierre Miquel, the Comédie's artistic director, has

chosen to present a true classic of the Gallic theatre - Pierre Carlet de Chamblain de Marivaux's 27th play, and dramatic swansong, *Les Fausses Confidences* (1737). A hard-hitting, even scandalous, attack on class and character, it's a play whose central theme can be summed up in a single word: money.

FRENCH THEATRE SEASON

Les Fausses Confidences by Marivaux
Directed by Jean-Pierre Miquel
Comédie Française at the Lyttelton Theatre,
Royal National Theatre, London SE1
30 Sept-4 Oct
The oldest national theatre company in the world performs Marivaux's comedy. With English surtitles.

Three plays by Michel Vinaver
Overboard
Translated by Gideon Lester
Directed by Sam Walters
The Orange Tree Theatre, Richmond, Surrey
2 Oct-1 Nov
Neighbours
Translated by Paul Amal
Directed by Geoffrey Beavers
The Orange Tree Theatre
4-22 Nov
Dissident, Goes Without Saying
Translated by Peter Meyer
Directed by Auriol Smith
The Room, The Orange Tree Theatre
6-23 Nov

La Dispute by Marivaux
Contention by Didier-Georges Gaby
Directed by Stanislas Nordet
Sadler's Wells at The Peacock Theatre,
London WC2
29-31 Oct
With Marivaux's dark comedy and Gaby's contemporary sequel, Stanislas Nordet explores the force of desire in a production which fits up this year's Angkor Festival. With surtitles.
La Maladie De La Mort by Marguerite

Duras. Directed and designed by Robert Wilson
Sadler's Wells at The Peacock Theatre,
London WC2
5-8 Nov
Through dance, music, visual arts and language, Wilson transforms Duras' modern tragedy for the stage. With English surtitles.

The Chairs by Eugène Ionesco
Translated by Martin Crimp
Directed by Simon McMurney
Royal Court/Theatre de Complicité at The Royal Court Theatre Downstairs, London WC2
From 19 Nov
The acclaimed Théâtre de Complicité teams up with the Royal Court for a production of Ionesco's tragic farce. Simon McMurney illustrates the tale of an elderly couple on an island with typical visual finesse.

New Voices From France at The Royal Court Theatre Upstairs, London WC2
One More Wasted Year by Christophe Pellet

Translated by Martin Crimp
Directed by Mary Pease
18-22 Nov, 9, 12, 15, 18 Dec
Rehearsed readings of
Agnès by Catherine Anne
Le Renard du Nord by Noelle Renaude
Mickey la Torche by Natacha de Pontcharra
Une Envie de Tuer Sur le Bout de la Langue by Xavier Durringer
19-22 Nov

A rare opportunity for British audiences to see the most vibrant work by a new generation of French dramatists.

Roberto Zucco by Bernard-Marie Koltès
English version by Martin Crimp
Directed by James MacDonald
RSC at The Other Place, Stratford-upon-Avon
In repertoire 20 Nov-11 Feb 98

The first major production of Koltès' work in Britain follows the enigmatic Roberto Zucco on a mythical journey of violence and intrigue.

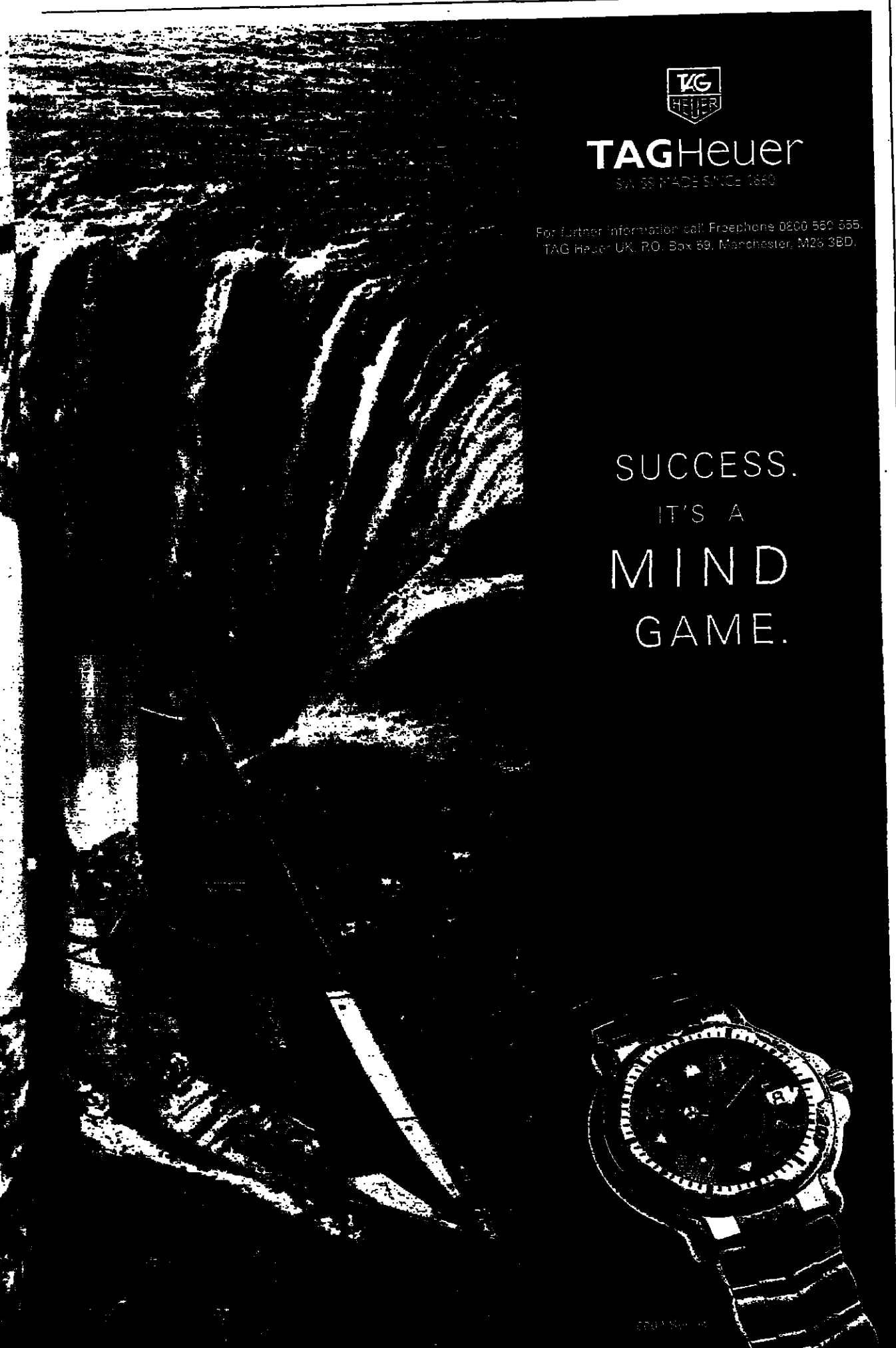
Beckett Shorts: A special season of six short plays by Samuel Beckett
Directed by Kade Mitchell
RSC at The Other Place, Stratford-upon-Avon
22 Oct-13 Nov
Footfalls, *Rockaby*, *Not I*, *Embers*, *A Piece of Monologue* and *That Time* have been thematically selected to provide a programme which explores time, memory, death and gender.

Oh Les Beaux Jours by Samuel Beckett
Directed by Peter Brook
Royal National Theatre at Riverside Studios, London W6
27 Nov-4 Dec
Winnie is buried, up to her waist, then up to her neck. With nothing but her scant possessions, fading memories and her almost comatose spouse, Winnie becomes a survivor. Brook has chosen Beckett's French language version, written a year after the English *Happy Days*.





PHOTOGRAPHS
BY LAURIE LEWIS

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The Comédie Française bring Marivaux's comedy *Les Fausse Confidences* to at the Royal National Theatre, London, for a five-day season, starting next Tuesday. The production, at the Lyttelton Theatre, will be one of the highlights of a season of French theatre that runs at various venues in London and Stratford-upon Avon until December, showcasing the work of venerable modernist figures such as Marguerite Duras and Samuel Beckett as well as some of the young Turks of the French contemporary stage. Laurie Lewis was given exclusive backstage access to the Comédie Française before they left their base in Paris. Coraly Zohanero (above) awaits her cue in *Les Fausse Confidences*, while Catherine Samie (left) watches the stage action on the green room television while waiting to go on.



Surely there's more to life than 'This Life'?

To look at the current crop of new plays, you'd think that all twentysomethings are interested in Britpop and beer. But then again, what else are young playwrights to write about except their own inexperience?

By Dominic Cavendish



Photo: Adrian Dennis

"Something's got to be said, and I don't know if we've got anything to say," says a young woman, cradling a can of beer, surveying her audience meaningfully. In its posturing lack of assertion, this anti-statement – from *Zero*, by Frantic Assembly – could serve as the creed of a bizarre new dramatic sub-genre: the twentysomething play.

Plays written by twentysomethings, particularly male twentysomethings, have been rife for a while. But many of the so-called "bratpack" credited with rejuvenating theatre over the past few years precociously located their imaginations beyond the immediate concerns of their peer group. Martin McDonagh, for example, headed for fantasy Ireland in *The Lonesome Cowboy*. Jez Butterworth for a reconfigured Fifties Soho in *Mojo*. When 31-year-old Mark Ravenhill (above) marched on to home soil with *Shopping and Fucking* last

year, it looked as though the definitive stage answer to television's *This Life* had been written in one fell swoop; henceforward it would be hard to convey the experiences of the in-flux generation, struggling with their precarious Nineties lives, without a sense of *déjà vu*, of uninspired sameness. (Aptly, Ravenhill himself has now been commandeered to breathe angst into *This Life*'s third series).

Yet the prosaic and the repetitive, the stressed-out as much as the sexed-up, are the flaunted hallmarks of the current crop of plays about men and women barely old enough to remember the last Labour government. Even more than *Shopping and Fucking*, these co-devised pieces confine themselves to the here and now, conjuring a physically urgent sense of an age group whose time is almost audibly ticking away.

Frantic Assembly's *Zero* is TV's *Friends* without the jokes. Or the character details. It does, though, have cans of beer, which the cast throw to one another, in a clumsy way, in between rushing around to screeching techno music and earnestly addressing the audience like new-found best buddies. Instead of a Manhattan apartment, they have a large, plastic doll's house. Apparently conceived "in the back of a minibus approaching the equator in Ecuador", *Zero*'s theme is the millennium. The tone alternates between the portentous

"We are children of chaos, children of the damned" – and the hyper-confessional – "I can see I'm really boring the tits off you". John Keates's *27*, performed by his theatre company Fecund, involves a similar act of navel-gazing to bursts of Britpop and club anthems. The title marks the age at which Keates became conscious of time galloping, and provides the cue for a multi-media retrospective/celebration of his life to date: birth, school, teen crushes, university, trips to Ibiza, first shite job, London hedonism etc. He (or, at least, the actor playing him) becomes a kind of everybloke, on a journey of self-realisation, his conclusion: "What's wrong with failure? Glorious failure!"

Keates wouldn't exactly be an ideal suit-or for *Grace*, the quaintly named heroine of Sarah Woods's play of the same name, who has not a gram of the chemical generation in her. Her days are spent



How do you get twentysomethings into the theatre? Give them lots of 'Shopping and Fucking'. No wonder Mark Ravenhill (left) is moving to 'This Life' (above)

sorting through the options that force their way through umpteenth hatch-doors in her bedroom walls as her biological alarm-clock hits 30. Her opening "memo to self", in which she makes a note to do everything from get married to swim the Channel, suggests that she could be the younger, more surreal sister of Bridget Jones. Like Ms Jones, her refrain is one of jocular exasperation – she is too panicked to have anything insightful to say.

It would be convenient to dismiss these plays as under-achieving, self-indulgent, creatively bankrupt attempts to cash in on youth culture, their truisms fit only for people with zero taste. You're in your twenties? You got nothing particular to say? Don't worry – throw on some jeans and a

T-shirt, and let's do the show right here! Except that critics and audiences alike have fallen for them in a big way. Particularly *Grace*, still on tour after a year. As Victoria Worsley, who plays the image of her former "disastrously single" self, points out, "*Grace* is about recognition, not revelation. Some guys ask, 'What's it about?' It is ordinary, but that's the point. It doesn't feel ordinary when you are going through it; it feels very painful."

"From the perspective of a traditional playwright, *27* is a bad play," John Keates admits, "but there is something happening, which it is difficult to define. The intention is create emotional temperatures that, in an accumulative way, have an impact on the audience."

Director's guff, you might think, but, despite its patchy script, *27* is a surprisingly moving representation of a constantly changing period of development; like the other two works, its content is imaginatively bound up in its form.

Dramatised statements of the obvious, then, but why shouldn't theatre perform this rather modest descriptive role from time to time, in its search for new audiences and new relevance? The only danger is, of course, that every young company will start feeding on its own inexperience; we'll be dragged into a youth ghetto and bludgeoned with mortgage crises and premarital hang-ups. We'll just have to learn to spot pale imitations of *This Life*: a few months ago it was Daragh Carville's *Language Roulette*,

guys and gals quick-firing Seventies TV references at each other in a pub. At the moment, it's Matt Markham's *Queuing* in Hampstead, which opens with the immortal line: "Imagine what life will be like when the last can of beer has been opened."

That's one generational gambit this particular lager-swilling 27-year-old finds impossible to swallow.

Queuing: to Sunday, Pentameters Theatre, London NW3 (0171 435 3648)

Zero: 13-15 October, BAC, London SW11 (0171-223 2223)

Grace: 18-19 October, BAC (as above) 27: 27 November-14 December, Oval House, London SW11 (0171-582 7680) and touring

Full bard and lodging at the Intercontinental

At the end of August the actor Christopher Luscombe completed a 12-month stint in Stratford with the RSC. Most of his colleagues then took a well-earned break. But he set off on an international tour with his one-man show, 'Half Time'. This is his version of events...

Tuesday 26th August
Heathrow. Not a great start. The plane to Cyprus was delayed and check-in was interrupted by a security alert. I still haven't recovered from the ordeal of shutting up my digs in Stratford and moving back to London, and now I'm travelling through the night with a bag of props and an addled brain. Over the next three weeks I'll be visiting five countries and ten venues with my

one-man show. Once airborne, I embark on a fitful itinerary (I last performed the piece more than a month ago in Chichester); the stewardess casts a nervous glance in my direction as I jabber silently to myself. I arrive as dawn breaks over the Troodos Mountains, and am met by Wing Commander Malcolm Jones, my host for the next week.

Thursday 28th August
I'm performing at military bases in Cyprus, the first venue being RAF Akrotiri. Small stage, steeply-raked seating and new lighting rig – oh, and Malcolm tells me we're sold out. In other words, near-perfect conditions. It takes longer than usual for the audience – mainly officers and their wives – to start laughing. But they do seem to be listening hard (that terrible euphemism). In the second half the response picks up and I find I'm enjoying myself.

Friday 29th August
An open-air show hosted by the Commander of British Forces. Normally I'd be apprehensive about going alfresco, but with such warm weather and no breeze it seems quite a good idea. The lighting is very rudimentary though, and my sound cues are relayed over the family's domestic hi-fi. But I'm determined to rise above the problems – amongst which is a pillar centre stage. Wonderfully attentive black-tie audience led by the merrily laughing Air Vice-Marshal. Occasionally visited on stage by a bat but manage to keep my concentration. Had I spotted the gecko which was apparently darting around my feet it might have been a different story.

Monday 1st September
Everyone stunned by the news of Princess Diana's death. After some deliberation, the Air Vice-Marshal decides that the

show must go on, so we head for Ayios Nikolaos, an army garrison to the east of the island. We're outdoors again, but it's less picturesque this time – a makeshift stage in the corner of a huge car park, surrounded by enormous hangars. Desperately bleak by day, but by nightfall a surprisingly intimate acting area emerges. A smaller audience, perhaps because of the news. At the end I'm asked to dedicate the performance to the Princess and we all stand for the national anthem.

We must have made a pathetically touching sight in this desolate car park on a far-flung patch of British territory. **Tuesday 2nd September**
Stayed last night in Officer's Mess accommodation and woke up to a lavish breakfast, followed by a lazy morning reading every newspaper in sight. Tore myself away at lunchtime and Malcolm drove us to another garrison – Dheke-

lia. Took a while to galvanise the technical team (a teacher, an accountant and Kevin – a schoolboy – on lights) to the extent that I actually went to sleep during the rehearsal – a first. An enthusiastic audience, who sobered up abruptly for another curtain speech and a woefully inadequate recording of the national anthem.

Thursday 4th September
Arrive in Delhi to find both my performances here have been cancelled – one at the British Council, the other at the High Commissioner's Residence. The whole British Community – and most of the Indians I meet – really are in mourning, and nobody's in the mood for a comic show. So despite feeling a bit of a fraud, I resign myself to a holiday in the opulent surroundings of the H C's des res.

Sunday 7th September
An amazing four days, in which life's been dominated by the Princess of Wales. At the Taj Mahal, the architecture's sadly upstaged by a new tourist attraction – the bench where she sat for that famous photograph. Went to sign the book of condolence at the Commission, and to my bewilderment was rushed to the front of the long queue. Apparently all guests of the High Commissioner are given this privilege. The clerk who led me to the table dismissed my protests, although couldn't help inquiring as I sat down "who actually are you?"

Tuesday 9th September
From one oasis of luxury to another – the splendours of the Intercontinental Hotel in Muscat, where I'm joined by my enterprising producer, David Donahue. The hotel staff work all day to turn a function room into a theatre, and we're rewarded with a terrific audience, led by the British Ambassador and his wife, who saw me a few weeks ago at Stratford and seem to be almost as well-informed about the London theatre scene as my agent. Well, better informed actually.

Wednesday 10th September
On to the Dubai Intercontinental, for two performances. Discover that I'm booked into Marbles Wine Bar, where the usual attraction is Madame



Christopher Luscombe: one man and his Dogberry

Huda, a voluptuous belly dancer. The audience are understandably nonplussed by my act, and tomorrow night I'm promised a more suitable space in this vast hotel.

Thursday 11th September
A rave in the local press – did they really see that fiasco last night and conclude "One-Man Show Enthralls Dubai"? Move over Paul Taylor. But tonight the show – now in a smart upstairs room – does go down a treat, although I say so myself. We're stuck for a venue over the weekend (the theatre in Doha pulled out at the last minute), but the General Manager of the hotel in Abu Dhabi is in the audience and says he'll try and fix something up for us.

Tuesday 16th September
Have spent a glorious weekend

lounging around at the Abu Dhabi Intercontinental and, true to his word, the Manager here has secured us a performance tonight at the British Ambassador's Residence. His Excellency seems only too happy to throw open his doors at such short notice, and has drummed up a splendid audience to pack out the elegant drawing room. He sits on the front row with his Danish wife Sophie and their three beautiful blond children, who laugh raucously at all the rude bits of the show.

Wednesday 17th September
The last night. Another "parlour performance", this time in Bahrain, where our hostess is Adriné, a glamorous Armenian who seems to combine running the city's international School with coordinating the

local social scene. We celebrate the end of the tour with a night on the town, but I soon begin to wilt, and am mindful of tomorrow's early start and the flight home. It'll be strange to feel the chill of the English autumn next week in Newcastle, but I'll appreciate company both on- and off-stage at the Theatre Royal. Intervals aren't much fun in a one-man show, nor is the moment of walking into the bar afterwards, when you suddenly feel strangely guilty for single-handedly hijacking everyone's evening. At least next week Shakespeare can take some of the blame too.

Christopher Luscombe is currently appearing with the RSC in *The Merry Wives of Windsor* and *Much ado about Nothing* at the Theatre Royal, Newcastle. Bookings 0191-232 2061

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25 years on the Connection needs no correction

From Saturday, readers of 'The Independent' can get 15 per cent off French Connection's winter collection for men and women. Tamsin Blanchard recommends the best buys for the season ahead. Photographs by Julian Marshall

This autumn, you may sense a gap in your wardrobe for a short leather skirt with side splits; a pair of boot-cut suede trousers; or a calf-length coat with a tie belt and a fake fur collar. You can have them all, and save money in the process: French Connection is offering *Independent* readers 15 per cent off at its 22 stores around the country.

French Connection grew out of the founder, Stephen Marks's own label, begun in 1969. The movie *French Connection* was released in 1971, and when Marks teamed up with a Paris-based designer the following year, he borrowed the name. It was an inspired choice, giving the chain a cosmopolitan stamp. "The whole idea was to bring designer fashion to the high street," says Marks, in between this week's shop openings in Watford, Amsterdam, Miami and Pasadena.

FC's strength has always been its ability to produce design-led fashion at affordable prices. One of the strongest pieces for this season, a green Indian embroidered and sequined dress, takes the label full circle back to the early days when ethnic fabrics were its trademark.

French Connection launched its range for men in 1976, and in 1986 followed it with childrenswear.

By definition, fashion changes constantly. The secret of survival is to keep one step ahead of the pack. On the whole, French Connection has achieved this. It has even managed to develop its own controversial advertising campaign, with ad man of the moment Trevor Beattie. Just four letters, FCUK, have worked miracles for the company's street cred. A simple white T-shirt bearing the logo FCUK has become a clubber's must-have and created a new generation of customer for the company.

"I wanted the advertising to stand out," says Marks. And the stark white adverts, some without a product in sight, do just that, and with a sense of humour. "All we're making is a few frocks," he says.

FC has managed to evolve with the Nineties from something that, in the Eighties, was in danger of becoming tired and dated, into something minimal and modern; and that's just the shop fittings. The clothes achieve a clever balance, reflecting catwalk trends, without alienating the customer. French Connection fans know they can find comfort and utility as well as something a bit out of the ordinary. The company offers a range of clothes that is, says Marks, "a little more forward".

One of the main differences between designer fashion and the high street version is the willingness of the retailer to compromise. The catwalk may dictate power shoulders, but if the consumer thinks they look ridiculous, she won't buy them. "The public are the best judges," says Marks. "And when they're buying in the quantities they are, then we're giving them what they want."

For men who can shop for themselves there are leather and suede jackets and knitwear that ranges from rugged and chunky to fine-gauge and V-necked. There are also shoes, and scarves that look hand-knitted.

For work, French Connection offers the best classic single-breasted suit for £220. That's a saving of £33 with one of *The Independent's* exclusive discount tokens. How can you afford not to go shopping? FC? OK.



Main photograph: Green sheer sequin shift with underslip, £100; scarf, £30; cardigan £60
Far left: Man's camel suede shirt, £225; bouclé scarf, £15
Left: Tie-front grey coat with fake fur collar, £200; grey sparkle v-neck t-shirt, £30

Above, from top:
Man's navy fleece zip-up top, £70; Man's brown single-breasted suit jacket, £140; trousers, £80; orange V-neck jumper with shoulder stripe, £50; black loafers with twist detail, £90; Beige V-neck T-shirt, £20; beige suede trousers, £160; camel ponyskin desert boots, £86; Grey single-breasted suit jacket, £160; trousers, £70; scarf £30.

All from French Connection branches nationwide. Inquiries: 0171-399 7200

Stylist: Charlie Harrington
Make-up: Alex Babsky
Models: Nathalie and Freddy at Select
Photographer's assistant: Ben Barnes

LONDON FASHION WEEK

From Impossible to be Worse to Hard to be Better

Spain's top fashion designer is slumped in a chair, sucking on a Marlboro. She doesn't look like the glamorous vision her press clippings suggest, but Azuaga Arzuaga can be forgiven. Having flown into London from Madrid, where she has been celebrating the end of Spanish Fashion Week, the 27-year-old looks in need of a rest. But that will have to wait. There is next Tuesday's fashion show to organise.

Azuaga is half-way there already. Her spring/summer collection for men and women sits on rails in the spacious studio of her

London agent, Palladio. There are similar rails in Paris, Milan, New York and Madrid. This is not unusual for a designer who despite her youth is extremely organised; she has 300 stockists world-wide, and an annual turnover of £10m. Arzuaga showed for the first time in Spain last March. The show made the front page in *Spain*, where she is designer of the year, but she seems uninterested by their adulation.

"Spain is not happening for fashion: it is very boring and very conservative, they all dress *pijo*," she says in

her heavily accented English. *Pijo* is Spanish for preppy, or yuppie. She is lucky. Her father, Florentino, runs an exclusive vineyard which produces some of the finest red wine in Spain. His label, Arzuaga, guaranteed the young designer an instantly recognisable product; her mother, Maria Luisa, is also a knitwear designer and manufacturer.

The young Azuaga grew up on a sprawling estate near Madrid. "It was not like Falcon Crest, you know," she insists when asked about her upbringing; and this is despite sharing the grounds

of her family home with 300 wild deer. However, it is clear that she is now fairly shy of the high life. "I do not mix with fashion people, I live in the country and read a lot," she says. Ten years ago it was different. Miss Arzuaga was a wild child. She sang in a band called Impossible to be Worse, hung out with Almodovar's muse Rosie de Palma, and wore the most outrageous Gaultier she could find.

After attending the Madrid University of Fashion, Arzuaga designed her first knitwear collection, and sold it in Paris. She is

known for clever and colourful knitwear designs that marry unusual fabric combinations, and for the latest in computer technology, but colour and texture is where she excels. "It is a preconception that I only do knits," she says. In fact, though stores such as Whistles, Liberty and Browns Focus sell her jumpers, there is much more to Azuaga Arzuaga clothes.

The collection that is being shown as part of London Fashion Week is her seventh. About one-third is knitwear; the rest is a confection of quirky,

asymmetrical slip dresses with delicate embroidery. It also features candy-striped men's trousers and shorts. Elements of London style include hand-painted shirts and dresses, and lopsided vest tops with layers of stretch organza over textured prints. There is also a line of sunglasses and jewellery. What next? Well, if her clothes are anything to go by, her father's wine must be a very pleasant tipple. Waiter!



Melanie Rickety
Paratix Outamura



BELOVED AND BONK Diary of a divorce

It's a funny old place, grief. In the past month since Beloved left, I've found myself sobbing gratefully in the arms of Tories, Masons and even, God help me, people who would vote double yes to devolving their parish council.

It's not that I simply force myself on complete strangers and say excuse me my husband has just left me. I need to soak your lapels and smear snot down your collar for a few moments. No, it's more that huge amounts of compassion and warmth lurk in the most unexpected of places. I mean, I'm a good left-wing liberal and I make hard and prejudiced judgements about people on the basis of dress, accent and vehicle. So it comes as a shock to discover that Land-Rover drivers with Sloane habits and county voices can press you to their bosom with greater sincerity than Levi wearers with glottal stops and old Citroens.

In fact, it has been a month of discoveries. I have discovered how people come to do murder, suicide and anaesthetic free willy-ectomy. I've discovered that violently unsisterly thoughts about Beloved's Bonk are a great comfort at four in the morning: and I've discovered how to change the message on the answerphone. This last nearly led me into seriously unacceptable behaviour, of which Beloved would most definitely not have approved. I changed our old message (Beloved gloomily giving his many alternative numbers) to a new one me saying hello and giving one of Beloved's alternative numbers. As I did it, the options open to me became apparent: "Hello leave a message after the tone. If you wish to contact Beloved you are not my friend anymore" or "If you wish to contact Beloved you need therapy" "If you wish to contact Beloved phone him between 1 and 3am." I finally settled on "and if you wish to contact Beloved you'll need a Ouija board." I left it on the machine for about an hour, twitching nervously right next to the phone, and then I chickened out, because I cling. In the face of all the evidence to the contrary I cling to the hope that Beloved will leave Bonk and come back to me and I feel that "Contact Beloved by Ouija" is not a message that would smooth his safe passage home.

Of course there isn't anything that will do that, so I've found myself looking for signs and portents of the sort I used to predict the outcome of spelling tests or adolescent crushes. "If the next car is a yellow golf then he still loves me." Well not quite like that because I don't think they made yellow golfs so I'd be setting myself up for a lifetime of failed spelling tests and broken marriages wouldn't I? The one I tried last week was "If he sees me in this new dress it'll all be OK." I had it planned... my exit to a solo outing as he arrived to pick up the kids. But for the first time in our entire married life he was early. Instead of a brief swirl of blue silk and black high heels as I slammed the back door in nonchalant defiance, he snuck upstairs and caught me doing my mascara in the landing mirror with my tights on over my knickers and no dress. Then when I finally teetered resplendent into the kitchen, the straps on my shoes were too loose and I had to climb off them and try making an extra hole with the corkscrew. By this time I was shaking with the strain so I missed the strap and nearly speared a major artery.

But maybe it was a good portent, because he made the holes for me with some evening-shoe-strap-holing device on his Swiss army knife. Knives? Puncturing? Yes come in Mr Freud... I could still have a chance.

Stevie Morgan



Photograph: Tom Pilon

Give in, cop out - a mother's confession

What are we doing to our children? Bringing them up to express themselves freely in a way we never could, or failing them by refusing to teach them how to behave? Is it because we are enlightened that we give them their own way? No, says Diana Appleby, it is because we feel guilty...

I recently had tea in of those grand old dusty hotels, in Leamington Spa, with my grandmother and mother. I took along my four and nine-year-old daughters, both giving smart dresses a rare airing. I felt so proud of them as we walked in.

While we were waiting for the tea to arrive, my four-year-old behaved as she always does - climbing over the chair, peeping at people, and then, bored, trotting up and down the aisles of chairs, singing happily to herself. I smiled fondly at her, until I realised my grandmother was not smiling. She was appalled. "You would never have behaved like this," she said. "Oh, come on nanna," I said. "She's only four." My mum butted in, "No, you wouldn't." Thinking about it on the way home, I realised that no, I

probably wouldn't. My sister and I would have sat quietly on the edge of our seats, buttoned up in well-pressed Windsor Woolly outfits. If I'd started to climb on my seat, or shouted, my mum would have smartly removed me from the hotel lounge and I would have been in severe disgrace. My whole approach to parenting is radically different from my mother's. It took this one small episode to remind me, how different. Our children wear bright, stretchy leggings from Next, T-shirts and soft Lycra tights. Their clothes are like mine are - stretchy, bendy, do what you want.

We give in over all sorts of matters, large and small. Go to the supermarket any day of the week, and you'll hear children pushing their parents to the limit with demands for sweets, throwing themselves to the ground, yelling, refusing to move. And what do we do? Instead of smacking the child hard - in front of other people - tucking them under one arm and walking out of the supermarket never to return, we negotiate. We say, "If you stop behaving like this then you can have some sweets. If you're good you can sit in the front on the way home." Our generation of parents believe you don't impose absolute authority on children - you negotiate, let them have their say, and their way.

Are we producing self-aware children - or uncontrollable ones? Many of my friends - including mothers who stay at home - say they are finding it harder and harder to control their children. My own nine-year-old will frequently answer me back - in public - and almost every request is met with, "Why?" or, "So what?" The question is - why have we changed our parenting styles so radically from those of our parents? Is it love? Or is it something else? Guilt?

"The main difference is of course that often both parents work," says Jenni Renwick-Smith, a child psychologist who deals with behavioural problems. "Instead of the mother making it her main job to bring up children, we rely on child-minders, nurseries, nannies or au pairs. Even grandparents now are often too busy, or live too far away to help."

Of course, she says, there have always been children who were cheeky or rebellious, but now she fears we are creating a generation of deeply insecure children - who don't react to their parents' attempts at discipline because it isn't consistent. Most parents feel they're doing their best - but often they're simply not. "This is very hard to say and I don't want to impose further guilt on mothers who have to work, but if a child goes through a lot of

changes in the years before they are five it does have an effect. We are forcing our children to be independent much earlier. Most children search for consistency and boundaries. If a creche has different members of staff each week, that is enormously confusing to a young child. If a nanny or au pair suddenly leaves, then that is a loss tantamount in importance to a death - and they will think it's their fault.

"To a young child, the adult they're with is their whole world. Anyone in child psychology will tell you that if you change those adults on a frequent basis, a child will become very unhappy and very insecure."

"If you leave the upbringing of your child to a constantly-changing rota of adults with different sets of rules, you cannot expect your child to accept your rules at home. They will become very confused, if they're allowed to do certain things at the creche, but not at home. It's insecurity we're talking about, and it's not an intellectual problem, but an emotional one."

This makes very uncomfortable reading to so many of us, who exist in a generation where it is entirely acceptable for mothers - and fathers - to work full-time and delegate the responsibility of bringing up their children, for the majority of time, to others. Parenting now means child-care hassle.

Jenni Renwick-Smith goes as far as to say she shudders to think what our children's parenting skills will be like.

"It is a conundrum for every working parent I know. We try so hard to think we are doing the best we can for our children, and we try to compensate in so many ways for simply not being there."

This, says Renwick-Smith, is why we see so many children throwing tantrums and refusing to accept authority, and why older children seem so reluctant to accept our rules.

"We refuse to accept that parenting is a long, hard, consistent slog. It is hard work to make children behave. You have to be ruthless at times, and unpleasant. When you've done a full week's work and you're confronted with a screaming child in a crowded supermarket on a Saturday, do you really feel up to a blazing row?"

"Laying the law down and denying our children things they want is so hard for us - because we're so scared of pushing them away - we feel so guilty about working in the first place. It isn't just parents. It's now the philosophy of most schools to let children self-express - if they're bored sitting down, they get up and wander around. Children are taught to think far more independently, and not be afraid to voice their own opinions."

"This is a positive step forward, but what's also happening is that many of the teenagers I see have little or no awareness of other people's feelings. We give in to our children so often to make up for not being there, we're not teaching them to think about other people's needs," says Renwick-Smith.

My mother regarded bringing myself and my sister up as her main job. If we behaved badly, it reflected on her skills as a parent. I have spent much more time working than I have bringing up my children. There is now a much greater acceptance of uncontrolled behaviour - if my children behave appallingly in public I get sympathy, not opprobrium.

The main period of change in parenting came in the sixties, when the extremes of libertarian philosophy filtered down gradually to ordinary young parents and became authorised by Dr Spock and, later, Penelope Leach. Authoritarianism will never return - and shouldn't, says Renwick-Smith, citing the example of Japan, which has one of the highest rates of child suicide and depression in the civilised world. But many of us are slowly coming round to the idea that children do not necessarily know best, and that in over-compensating for the lack of time we spend with them we might be creating a generation of insecure brats.



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DEBORAH ROSS

Was I curried by Edwina?

On Saturday I interviewed Edwina Currie. On Monday morning, that interview appeared in this paper. On Monday afternoon, Edwina announced her 26-year marriage to Ray Currie was over. Come Monday evening my answerphone was flashing with messages that went: "Is scoop there?" Oh, bloody-ha.

But did I really miss the story? No, I did not. My own view is that it was Edwina who told me the opportunity to tell me, which is a shame, because I am a very sympathetic listener and could have said some useful things along the lines of: "How did Ray put up with you for as long as he did?" and "What did he see in you in the first place, anyway?"

Now, I'm not saying Edwina isn't entirely without some endearing characteristics. She is, at heart, a very caring, warm person, the sort who had worked out that her elderly mother had sufficient funds to provide for her own nursing care for two and a half years should it come to it. Certainly, she is not the monster of self-obsession she is often made out to be.

I spent eight hours with her, all and all, and during this time she often asked me questions about myself. One was: "Would you mind carrying my bag?" And that was about it, actually.

Anyway, I did ask Edwina about her marriage. Truly, I did. And she said the things she always says about her marriage. Ray is brilliant. Ray "likes a quiet life" and lets her do her own thing. Ray "enjoys my books enormously." Edwina writes a lot, too. Some people say that those who go on and on about sex do so because they aren't getting any. Perhaps, yes, I did miss a clue here.

But what if I'd asked: "Are you and Ray about to split up?" Would she have answered truthfully? I don't think so. Hang on, are you saying that Edwina would have lied? No, of course I'm not. She is, I'm sure, a very honest person. But she lied to the press all the time when her daughter, Debbie, went about pretending to be a pop star. "I found myself telling lies! Bald-faced lies! And when Debbie and I read them back we were in stitches. Stitches!"

Of course, there was nothing cynical about Edwina making the announcement when she did. On Saturday, when I accompanied her to a book signing session, I noted that business was so quiet she almost had to half-nelson people into buying her latest novel. The fact that, from now on, she'll create much more of a fuss and will be greeted in bookshops by, if not more readers, than at least a full turn out of the tabloid press is, I'm sure, entirely unrelated. Yesterday's front page headline in The Daily Telegraph - "I'm leaving home, says Currie in novel style" - must have upset her greatly.

In short, was I shafted? Yes, of course I was. In future, will I begin every interview with the question: "Are you about to divorce?" Absolutely. But I refuse to take any of this hard because I know I'm not a rubbish journalist. It was I who, I'll thank you to remember, broke the story about Norma Major keeping grated cheese in an empty ice-cream tub in her freezer, so as to always have it handy. So don't tell me I don't know how to do my job, thank you.

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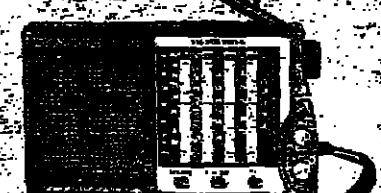
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21/OBITUARIES

THE INDEPENDENT
WEDNESDAY
24 SEPTEMBER 1997

Jimmy Witherspoon

James (Jimmy) Witherspoon, blues singer; born Gurdon, Arkansas 8 August 1923; died Los Angeles 18 September 1997.

The man who invented the word "lunatic" must have had Jimmy Witherspoon at the forefront of his mind. Spoon's blues were classic, macho, tragic and vivid.

If fish can love under water, And worms can love underground, If rats can love in a garbage can, Woman, you'd better not turn me down...

When the points are added up Witherspoon stands out as having been the ultimate amongst the troubadours of sexual disaster. He ranked with Joe Turner and Joe Williams as the most powerful of the city blues singers, and his instinct for the music gained him an enormous following throughout the world. He was particularly popular in Britain, coming there first in the early Sixties and returning until his final job last year at the Jazz Café in London.

Witherspoon began singing as a soloist in the family church when he was five years old. He left his school in Arkansas in 1939 when he was 16, forged a rail pass (his father had been a brakeman on the Missouri Pacific Railroad), and made his

way to Hollywood, where he hoped to begin a career as a singer. In the great tradition of such journeys, he wound up as a dishwasher at the Owl Drugstore. The young boy sang whenever the opportunity presented itself, and sat in with Art Tatum, Slim Stewart and T-Bone Walker.

Witherspoon joined the Merchant Marine in 1941 and, when his ship docked for repairs at Calcutta, sang for a time with hand led there by the American pianist Teddy Weatherford. He returned to California at an opportune moment in 1944 when the legendary blues singer Walter Brown had just left the band led by another pianist, Jay McShann (with whom, incidentally, Charlie Parker had begun his career a short time earlier).

The two men got on well together, and Witherspoon built up his name with McShann, staying until 1948.

"I never forget the first theatre date I played. I had been looking forward to it for a year and a half. It was at the Regal Theatre in Chicago, and Dinah Washington and the Ravens were also on the bill. They went to the manager and said that there was too much singing, so they cut me out of the show. That hurt me worse than anything in my whole life.

All I'd been doing was opening the show, and Dinah was the star."

McShann knocked the corners off Witherspoon and taught him about the raw side of music. Like many singers Witherspoon was restricted to singing in his favourite keys. Instrumentalists tend to look down on vocalists because the singers don't have to put in the years of learning and practice that a horn player needs to learn his craft. Witherspoon was aware of this when Art Tatum invited him to sing a number at a bar in Los Angeles where the pianist was playing.

"He started in B-flat, but after that he went into every key in the ladder, and I didn't know which key he was in. Jay had told me that he'd do this, so I paid no attention to Art and his chord structures, kept my mind on B-flat, and sang right through."

"Spoon," he said, hitting me on the shoulder and laughing. "Nobody in the world can do that."

Leaving McShann the singer settled in California, but he called McShann back when he recorded "Ain't Nobody's Business", a pensive blues which immediately became a hit in the rhythm-and-blues field and was to stay in his repertoire for the rest of his life. (This was

not unusual, for a Witherspoon programme remained the same night after night, year after year, with even the "spontaneous" announcements and cracks paraded at every performance.)

Witherspoon continued to have hit records and extracts from some of his most atmospheric concerts were issued on 78s with great success. But the tide of rock-and-roll enveloped him and business fell away, leaving him bankrupt in 1953.

His career was revived in 1958 when, having abandoned the rhythm-and-blues style of so many of his hits, he began recording albums with jazz musicians. A sensational appearance at the 1959 Monterey Jazz Festival when he sang with Earl Hines, Ben Webster, Coleman Hawkins, Woody Herman and Roy Eldridge gained him respect from the jazz specialists. Another session, recorded the same year at the Renaissance Club in Hollywood had him backed by Webster, Gerry Mulligan and Jimmy Rowles and confirmed the jazz qualities of his singing. His work appeared on an abundance of labels.

He toured Europe with Buck Clayton's band in 1961 and went to Japan with Count Basie in 1963. He returned to Europe to tour each year

throughout the Sixties and returned to the "pop" fold to have his "You're Next" recording enter the Hot 100 Hits of 1965. He worked briefly as a radio disc jockey and as an actor in the film *Black Godfather*. For his work in the latter the Black American Cinema Society gave him the Billie Holiday Phoenix Award.

Witherspoon worked for Ernie Garside, the Manchester jazz impresario, and made several albums in England. When, in 1984, Witherspoon became ill in Manchester he was diagnosed as having cancer of the throat and received immediate and vital treatment at Christie's Hospital. After a long fight he was able to return to singing a year or so later, but his consequent lack of stamina meant that he could appear only in very short sets. His voice was deeper and less flexible than before and he adopted a more intimate manner of projecting it.

He returned some five years ago to the Manchester Royal Exchange Theatre, which he regarded as a "thank you" reappearance to Christie's.

Witherspoon could be a difficult man, subject as he was to mood swings and ego problems, but perhaps this simply placed him in the operatic, as well as the blues, tradition.

— Steve Voe



"Spoon": a troubadour of sexual disaster

Photograph: Redfern

Helen Jepson

Helen Jepson, soprano; born Titusville, Pennsylvania 28 November 1904; twice married (one son, one daughter); died Bradenton, Florida 16 September 1997.

The first singer to reach the Metropolitan Opera through the medium of radio, Helen Jepson was a lyric soprano with a dark-eyed, blonde-haired beauty that matched her charming voice.

In the Thirties and Forties, American opera-goers were delighted to see a home-grown soprano alongside the more prominent European stars of the day, and she became a major attraction at the Met and other opera companies. She was the first soprano to record Gershwin's *Porgy and Bess*, had a starring role in the film *The Goldwyn Follies* (1938) and sang on radio with the bands of Paul Whiteman and Rudy Vallee, both of whom later claimed her as their discovery. In fact,

the conductor Philip James Neff featured her with his Hamburg Symphony Orchestra on a local New Jersey broadcast in June 1933, months before she attracted the interest of those two gentlemen.

Born in Titusville, Pennsylvania, in 1904, Jepson grew up in Akron, Ohio, where she studied voice and had leading roles in high-school productions of *I Pagliacci*, *The Bohemian Girl* and *HMS Pinafore*. She sold corsets and gramophone records to pay for tuition (also listening closely to records of Rosa Ponselle and other stars of the day) and won a scholarship to the Curtis Institute in Philadelphia.

While a student, she sang with the Philadelphia Civic Opera and organised a summer troupe with three other singers. Calling themselves the Mississippi Misses, they travelled 6,000 miles in 12 weeks giving concerts in 87 towns. In 1930, after appearances with the Philadelphia Symphony Or-

chestra and the Civic Opera, she created a sensation playing Nedda in *I Pagliacci* with the Philadelphia Grand Opera. She stayed with the company for three seasons until its financial collapse in 1932.

Moving to Manhattan with her husband, the flautist George Posselt, she made her coast-to-coast radio debut singing "The Jewel Song" from Faust on Rudy Vallee's *Fleischman Hour*, on Columbus Day 1933 (after which Vallee referred to himself as her "Columbus"). Engaged to make weekly appearances on the Paul Whiteman show, she was voted Most Important New Air Personality of 1934.

Her broadcasts attracted the attention of the Metropolitan and she made her debut with them on 24 January 1935 in the world premiere of Horatio Seymour's one-act opera *In the Pushes Garden*. Starring the great baritone Lawrence Tibbett as a stern pasha who buries his wife's lover alive in a trunk (in which he had been hiding),

it was a weak piece, but Jepson was acclaimed for her beauty, voice and charm. Violetta, Louise, Nedda, Melisande and Desdemona were among roles that followed, while she continued to get regular bookings on the radio on *The Bell Telephone Hour*, *Your Hit Parade* and other shows.

On 10 October 1935 *Porgy and Bess*, the superb folk-opera by George and Ira Gershwin and DuBose Heyward, had its premiere in New York, and just four days later Jepson and Tibbett started recording its songs for Victor Records with the orchestra and chorus of the stage production. It was well known that George Gershwin had originally hoped that Tibbett might create the role of Porgy and the composer supervised the recordings, which have frequently been reissued and still impress. (The original leads, Todd Duncan and Anne Brown, eventually recorded their roles in 1940 for Decca.) Jepson made few other

recordings, though she put her Desdemona on disc in an abridged 12-part version of Verdi's *Otello* (with Giovanni Martinelli as the Moor and Tibbett as Iago) in 1939.

Two years earlier, Sam Goldwyn, planning a film extravaganza called *The Goldwyn Follies* (to rival on screen the stage revues of Ziegfeld), cast Jepson as one of the stars. The resultant *mélange* of comedy acts, opera, ballet, jazz and popular music, linked by the wisp of a story, was an indigestible hodge-podge but there were some compensations, including luscious colour, songs by the Gershwins, and the preservation on film of Jepson singing "The Brindisi" (from Verdi's *La Traviata* (with Charles Kullmann), Enrico Toselli's "La Sereña", a chorus of the Gershwins' "Love Walked In" (with Kenny Baker) and, best of all, a soaring "Soprano Libretto" which winningly displayed her fine coloratura. Paramount announced that

it would be signing Jepson to a contract for a string of filmed operettas, but perhaps because other opera stars (including Tibbett) had failed to prove box-office draws, the plan fell through.

Divorced in the early Forties and remarried (to Walter Delera), Jepson continued to headline at the Met while doing concerts and broadcasts until a throat ailment forced her retirement in 1947. She became a voice teacher (one of her pupils was the future stage and television star Edie Adams), then returned to college in New Jersey to study speech therapy for handicapped children, taking up volunteer work in her local Cerebral Palsy Rehabilitation Centre.

She continued to attend the opera regularly and was usually a guest attraction at the Met's special events, where she was always given an ovation befitting of one of the house's great sopranos.

— Tom Vulliamy

Professor Roger Hardisty

Roger Michael Hardisty, haematologist; born London 19 September 1922; Professor of Haematology, Institute of Child Health, London 1969-87; Emeritus Professor, Royal Free Hospital School of Medicine 1987-97; married 1947 Jytte Jarnum (one son, one daughter); died London 18 September 1997.

When Roger Hardisty was appointed to Great Ormond Street Hospital in 1958 the death rate from childhood leukaemia was 100 per cent. By the time he retired, up to 70 per cent of afflicted children were surviving apparently cured.

This major advance was also due, certainly, to work in other centres, both national and international, but, as the first specialist to be solely concerned with paediatric haem-

atology in Britain, Hardisty's role was pivotal. His other area of research, into how the blood clots, was fundamental and equally productive, with the new knowledge applied to running a world-famous treatment centre for haemophilia and other clotting disorders.

Apart from his National Service in the Army, Hardisty's early medical life was centred on St Thomas's Hospital. Like most London teaching hospitals then, this had its stuffy establishment consultants who saw their only responsibility as patient care at the hospital and in Harley Street. But, unlike many medical schools, St Thomas's had a large body of exceptionally gifted academic doctors committed to research and teaching as well. In the heady intellectual atmosphere of the post-war period the output of new and important results was

unique for a British undergraduate hospital. Unusually, moreover, the research was heavily based on the laboratory and, even more unusually, at St Thomas's such doctors were not second-class ancillaries but clinicians expected to see patients in the wards.

Appointed to Great Ormond Street after a short period at Cardiff, Hardisty brought this unique approach with him. Once established, strong individual departments were given formal academic status, so that in 1969 Hardisty became the first professor of paediatric haematology in Britain.

The hospital was a referral centre not only for Britain but also for abroad, and the treatment of leukaemia was a significant problem. Research was indicating that remissions could sometimes be obtained using drugs such as steroids and the

"antimetabolites". Nevertheless, after a few weeks or months the leukaemia invariably relapsed, and, though occasionally a second remission might be obtained, inevitably it returned and the child died.

In the early 1960s the suggestion arose that giving the drugs together or in succession might produce longer remissions — and that carefully controlled schedules in expert centres might eventually produce cures. In retrospect such trials sound straightforward: at the time they were anything but easy. The toxic effects of the drugs added to the misery of the disease, and even when the leukaemia had been absent for some months it might suddenly return, say, as a lump in the testicle or ovary, or as leukaemia meningitis (which Roger Hardisty was the first to identify). These recurrences de-

manded surgical operation or radiotherapy, but some consultants refused to allow their patients to have such major procedures. Given the then inevitable lethal outcome of leukaemia, treatment might be worse than the disease; humane terminal care was thought to be paramount.

Similarly, in the heroic surgery starting around that time, particularly organ transplantation, the results were dismaying. Many now speak of the surgeons who persisted to success as having the "courage to fail". No less courage was shown by those haematologists who persisted in treating childhood and other leukaemias. Among these, Hardisty (as humane as anybody, giving his home telephone number to worried parents) was the foremost in Britain.

Showing that the rarer

forms of childhood leukaemia behave differently from the commoner "lymphoblastic" variety, as secretary and then chairman of the Medical Research Council's working party on leukaemia in childhood he was rewarded when a trial disclosed that no fewer than 70 per cent of children with the latter had survived. Another reward was a secretly organised tea party for his retirement, in the boardroom of Great Ormond Street, attended by his many survivors from leukaemia.

Roger Hardisty was an exceptionally modest man (figuring in neither *Who's Who* nor the Honours List, though the French government made him a Chevalier de l'Ordre National du Mérite). He shunned merely adding his name to research papers, but delighted in transmitting those written by colleagues into pellucid prose.

The co-author of two notable books, *Bleeding Disorders: investigation and management* (1965) and *Blood and its Disorders* (1974), he was an outstanding editor of the *British Journal of Haematology*, and alone among the contributors to one multi-author textbook his required no alterations at all.

Apart from photography (at which he excelled) his outside interests were mainly intellectual (as befitted somebody who could give medical seminars in French or Danish). These — whether reading, listening to music, or going to the theatre — were reflected in his Hampstead home, where he and his Danish wife, Jytte, created a relaxed and cosy mixture of books, pictures, and antique and modern furniture.

Nor was the company at the frequent dinner parties exclusively medical: the conversation



Hardisty: modest

over the food and carefully chosen wine would be livened by an economist, a music critic, or a botanist. And if, during his final illness with stomach cancer, he had been asked to look on the bright side, he would probably have remarked wryly that at least he wouldn't have to experience the full awfulness of John Birt's future BBC.

— Stephen Lock

DEATHS

TURPIN, Kenneth Victor (Ken), aged 55. After a long illness bravely borne, Ken died at home on 22 September, with Kate beside him. A much-loved husband, son, brother, uncle and friend, he will be sadly missed. The funeral will be held at Dean Row Chapel, Addington Road, Woking, on 29 September at 11.30am, followed by committal at Mole Valley Crematorium at 12.30pm. Family flowers only, but donations may be made to Ken's memory to Macmillan Nurses Cancer Care, c/o and enquiries to George Hall & Son, 39 Derby Road, Streatham SE4 4AB, telephone 0181-432 2131.

WOODS, S. John, painter and graphic designer. 21 November 1915 - 22 September 1997. Very much loved husband, father and friend. Buried at Bournemouth Crematorium, Friday 26 September 1997, 9.30am.

Announcements for Gazette BIRTHS, MARRIAGES & DEATHS (Births, Adoptions, Marriages, Deaths, Memo-

BIRTHS, MARRIAGES & DEATHS

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Birthdays

Ms Charlotte Atkins MP, 47; Miss Svetlana Berikova, former ballerina, 65; Sir Mervyn Brown, former diplomat, 74; Professor Geoffrey Burdick, astronomer, 72; Professor Terence Burles, University of Westminster, 67; Mr Colin Cowe, former Senator, 68; Margaret College, Oxford, 89; Sir Seymour Egerton, former chairman, Courts Bank, 82; Mr Brian Glavin, writer and journalist, 66; Vice-Admiral Sir Alan Grose, 60; Professor Richard Hoggar, writer and former Warden of Goldsmiths' College, London, 79; Mrs Catherine Hughes, former Principal, Somerville College, Oxford, 64; Mr Robert Jackson MP, 51; Sir David Lane, former chairman of the Commission for Racial Equality, 75; Mr Robert Lang, actor and director, 63; Mrs Linda McCarmey, photographer, 56; Professor George Miccol, former Principal, Aberdeen University, 68; Mr Gerry Marden,

rock musician, 55; Professor Bernard Nevill, textile designer, 63; Mr Anthony Newley, actor, singer and composer, 66; Mr Richard Northcott, film producer, 50; Mr John Rutter, composer and conductor, 52; Mr Richard Spring MP, 51; Mr Lawrence Urquhart, chairman, Burnah Castle, 62; Sir Jean-Pierre Warner, former High Court judge, 73.

Anniversaries

Births: Gerardo Cardano, physician and mathematician, 1501; Johan de Wit, statesman, 1625; Horace Walpole, fourth Earl of Orford, writer, 1717; Sharon Turner, solicitor and historian, 1768; George Alexander Osborne, pianist, 1806; Samuel Rutherford Crockett, novelist, 1860; Georges Claude, engineer and inventor of the neon light, 1870; Leon Quartermaine, actor, 1876; André Cournaud, physician, 1895; Francis Scott Key Fitzgerald, novelist, 1896;

Howard Walter Florey, Baron Florey, pathologist, 1898; Konstantin Chernenko, Soviet leader, 1911. Deaths: Pepin III (the Short), King of the Franks, 768; Philippus Aureolus Panacelus (Theophrastus Bombastus von Hohenheim), physician, 1541; John Keene Sturges, engraver and painter, 1790; Henry, first Viscount Hardinge of Lahore, Governor-General of India, 1856; Melanie Klein (Reizes), child psychoanalyst, 1960; Maynas Seibert, composer, 1960; Dame Isobel Beille, singer, 1963. On this day: the St Leger horse race was run for the first time, 1776; Sir James Brooke was appointed Rajah of Sarawak, 1841; a Papal Bull was issued, establishing a Roman Catholic hierarchy in England, 1850; Henri Giffard flew from Paris to Trappes in the first dirigible balloon, 1852; the first provincial daily newspaper in England was founded in Liverpool, the *Northwestern Daily Times*, 1853; Marks and Spencer opened

their first "Penny Bazaar" at Chesham, Manchester, 1894; the Phoenix Theatre, London, opened, 1930; the first Cinemascope film, *The Robe*, had its world premiere in Hollywood, 1953; the USS Enterprise, the first nuclear-powered aircraft carrier, was launched at Newport, Virginia, 1960. Today is the Feast Day of St Gerard Sagredo of Csanad, St Geremarus or Germer, St Pacificus of San Severino and St Robert Flower of Knaresborough.

Lectures

National Gallery: Christopher Rippelle, "Seurat (iv): Seurat's Late Landscapes", 1pm. Tate Gallery: Catherine Lever, "Sculpting the Soul: Rodin, Moore and Giacometti", 1pm. Victoria and Albert Museum: Simon Matthews, "Bernini and Baroque Sculpture", 2.30pm; Anna Jackson, "A Japanese Yarn", 7.15pm.

Luncheons

Arts Council of England Lord Gower, Chairman of the Arts Council of England, was the host at a luncheon held yesterday at the headquarters of the Arts Council, London SW1.

Among those present were: Mr Ian Jackson; Mr Brian Atwood; Mr Nik Powell; Mr Richard Holmes; Ms Jane Ferguson; Mr Gerald Kaufman MP; Mr Alan de Britton; Mr Jeremy Fraser; Mr Gavin Henderson; Mr Bush Harrison; Professor Richard Scuderi.

The Pilgrims

Lord Carrington, President, The Pilgrims, and Mr Robert M. Worcester, Chairman, presided over the 1997 Annual General Meeting held yesterday at the American Embassy, London W1. Sir Christopher Bland, Chairman of the BBC, gave the annual Sir Harry Britain Memorial Lecture afterwards.

ROYAL ENGAGEMENTS

The Duke and The Duchess of Gloucester visit Antrim, Northern Ireland; visit the Marina at Brix, Northumberland; visit Holy Island Castle, and visit Bamburgh Castle and the Grace Darling Museum, Northumberland; visit the Duke of Kent, President, Royal National Lifeboat Institution, attends a lifeboat-anniversary ceremony, Hull Marina, Kingston-upon-Hull and, as Patron, the London Philharmonic, attends a performance of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony by the London Philharmonic Choir, Royal Festival Hall, London SE1. Princess Alexandra visits the Imperial Cancer Research Fund Show, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk; visits the Women's Royal Voluntary Service, De Centre, Bury St Edmunds; visits St Edmund's Hospital, Bury St Edmunds; and, as Patron, St Albans Cathedral, St Albans, Hertfordshire. Year of St Edmund's Hospital, Bury St Edmunds.

Changing of the Guard The Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment mounts the Queen's Life Guard Horse Guards, 11am. F Company Sea Guards mounts the Queen's Guard, Buckingham Palace, 11.30am. but provided by the Irish Guards.



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Card No. ii- -

to speakers at the formal opening ceremonies of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund meeting, all shared the same message. Unsurprisingly, it was that the most pressing challenge for the international community was the "eradication of poverty and promotion of equality."

Southern to move into magazines

As big regional newspaper companies carve up the industry between them, smaller players such as the AIM-listed Southern Newspapers are finding opportunities for growth hard to come by.

As a result, Southern has decided to diversify into magazine publishing, and is contemplating a full stock-market listing to fund its expansion plans. Cathy Newman reports.

Southern said yesterday it had "sufficient resources" to make a "sizeable start" in magazine publishing, both by acquiring existing titles and starting up new ones. James Sexton, chief executive, said the company was taking a "quiet look" at magazines, as the current round of ownership changes in the regional press "can't go on indefinitely".

Despite laying plans to expand into both consumer and business magazines, Mr Sexton said he was still looking at

regional newspapers, but at the right price. He said Southern, the tenth-largest regional newspaper publisher, would like to be one of six big players to control the industry in years to come, and was considering moving to the full market to find substantial acquisitions. There are currently around 20 key regional publishers in the UK.

He reiterated his statement a year ago that the group was prepared to spend £100m to expand its publishing operations, and, despite not launching a rights issue "since the 1950s", said: "There's no reason why we shouldn't go for a rights issue if we found the right target."

Southern spent £31.5m buying United Provincial Newspapers' Welsh division last November, and the company said it would "look at anything" if United put the rest of its regional newspapers up for sale.

However, Mr Sexton admitted Southern would find it hard to challenge market leaders such as Trinity International Holdings and Newsquest Media Group, which announced last week it was to float.

Southern reported a 25 per cent drop in pre-tax profits to £14.1m for the year to the end of June, after £3.4m reorgan-



James Sexton: £100m war chest

isation and redundancy costs. Profits in the same period the previous year had been artificially boosted by a property disposal.

Mr Sexton said the "difficult period" of streamlining Southern's publishing regions, which led to 175 redundancies, was now virtually over, although around 25 further job losses were expected.

Underlying advertising revenue increased by 9.1 per cent across the group, although the company did experience a dip in the week of the death of Diana, Princess of Wales. Although there was no evidence of a downturn in advertising revenue, the company said it would be "foolish" to expect the present boom to continue throughout next year.

Circulation across the group fell 1.5 per cent, but increases in cover prices pushed revenue up 1.9 per cent.

Evening titles performed poorly, although Mr Sexton said there were some signs that the circulation decline in the evening market was coming to a halt.

Southern is looking at various promotional activities to boost circulations. One option is to reward loyalty by offering discounts to people who buy the group's papers consistently throughout the week.

Shares in Southern jumped 20.5p to 749p.

PEOPLE & BUSINESS



Contrary to the conventional wisdom that the IMF and World Bank shindig now winding down in Hong Kong is just one long round of cocktail parties, it is actually very hard work (so our correspondent there tells me).

Meeting after meeting, seminar after seminar. Honestly. So much so that after one 7.30am breakfast round table chin-wag on European Monetary Union, a nearly empty mini-bar bottle of Johnnie Walker Red Label was found under the table. EMU-talk is enough to drive anybody to drink, but the finger of suspicion has been pointed - no doubt unfairly - at our own dear Kenneth Clarke. Just because his breakfast seemed to consist of a cigar...

The security around the Hong Kong convention centre for the visiting Chinese premier has been remarkable even by the high standards of these international gatherings. One or two tranquil demonstrations, where police outnumber the demonstrators by about three to one, have been allowed. But the security blanket is tightest of all in the Grand Hyatt Hotel where most delegations - including the Chinese - are staying.

When the Premier, Li Peng, is in the hotel the doors are sealed and the lifts all stop operating. But Merryng King, Deputy Governor of the Bank of England, found himself in a moving lift on one of these occasions. As the doors opened he was joined by the Chinese premier and two soldiers armed to the teeth. Mr King reached his destination safely - but said he had decided not to reach for his mobile phone.

Fun and games at a fund raising bash the other night for the Crocus Trust, a new charity to raise awareness of and fund treatments for colon and bowel cancer. The bidding for a couple of first-class British

Airways tickets to any destination in the US was opened by Richard Branson at a deliberately insulting price of £1. What a wag.

There followed an awkward couple of minutes when Mr Branson's even more generous donation, free travel anywhere in the world courtesy of Virgin, looked as if it wouldn't even make the BA reserve. Relief all round as the tickets were finally knocked out for £8,000.

The entertainment continued as the auctioneer, Chris Tarrant, Capital Radio's star DJ, found himself adjudicating over a bidding war between his own wife and Mr Branson for a morning with Capital Radio's Flying Eye. Since Mr Tarrant's wife was sitting in Mr Branson's lap at the time, it was not easy to see who had actually won this coveted prize. It is only possible to speculate on why either of them wanted this special treat. Was it mere bravado on Mr Branson's part or do I sense a merger coming on?

The Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, has appointed a new fundraiser, Jeremy Bayliss, a chartered surveyor and senior partner of Gerald Ewa. Mr Bayliss has been a surveyor for 37 years and now becomes chief executive of Kew's Foundation, in order to raise funds for one of the world's greatest

botanic gardens. Kew's director, Sir Gilleen France, paid tribute to the "fantastic job" done by the previous chief executive, Giles Coude-Adams. The latter had raised more than £16.5m for Kew. "He has excelled my wildest dreams," Sir Gilleen tells me.

Martin Sorrell has finally merged the media buying operations of WPP's UK advertising subsidiaries, J Walter Thompson and Ogilvy & Mather. As with all mergers, however amicable, there are winners and losers. And it looks like JWT's Dominic Proctor has come out on top, with the title of chief operating officer of MindShare (the new merged body) and chairman of MindShare UK.

O&M's Mandy Pooler, one of the most powerful women in advertising and with a reputation for tough talking, becomes merely managing director of MindShare UK. As far as I understand it, "media buying" means buying advertising space. According to MindShare itself, the newly merged operation will "leverage its size to buy share of voice in the most cost-effective way possible". So now you know.

Cortec, the Isleworth, Middlesex-based drugs company, has poached Dr Phil Gould from Glaxo Wellcome UK to be its new director of research and development. Dr Michael Flynn, president and chief operating officer at Cortec, is delighted to have hooked such a big fish. Dr Gould is Glaxo's head of new product introduction and product technology, overseeing 340 technical staff. The newcomer "will take on responsibility for managing and leading all our R&D projects" at Cortec, says Dr Flynn. This will consist mostly of developing new "pharmaceutical delivery systems", in other words pills to cure osteoporosis and the like.

Bombardier project creates 300 jobs at Shorts

Shorts, the Belfast-based aerospace company, is investing £108.4m in a project which will create over 300 jobs and safeguard 671 more. Shorts is to design and make airframe components for two new aircraft being built by its Canadian parent company, Bombardier. The programmes will more than replace the hundreds of jobs lost at Shorts with the collapse of Dutch plane maker Fokker last year. Ulster Secretary Mo Mowlam announced the investment during a visit to Shorts before heading to the talks at Stormont. Shorts has been given assistance of £19.5m by the Government's Industrial Development Board.

SCS to sell subscriber bases

Securicor plans to sell the subscriber bases of Securicor Cellular Services (SCS) to Cellnet for £38m. The group will take a £17m exceptional charge in its full-year results following the disposal. SCS said the sale of its consumer and small business subscribers, estimated to number 254,000 at completion, to Cellnet, in no way affects Securicor's 40 per cent holding in Cellnet. Securicor also intends to conclude talks for the sale of its corporate subscribers to Martin Davies Telecommunications for £8m cash.

Siebe to buy Eaton division

Siebe, the engineering group, has agreed to buy the Appliance Control Operations of Eaton Corporation for £193m cash. Siebe will pay for the acquisition from existing resources. The company has also authorised the sale of certain companies, "which no longer fit the long-term strategy of building world-leading businesses at each of Siebe's three divisions". The companies include its Tecalemit Garage Equipment operations and Wells Electronics.

Arcadian reveals approach

Arcadian International, the hotels company, has received an approach from a third party which may or may not lead to an offer being made for the whole of the issued ordinary share capital of the company. "Discussions are at a preliminary stage and a further announcement will be made in due course," Arcadian said. The shares rose from 50.5p to 65.5p, valuing the company at almost £97m.

Woodchester takeover

Woodchester Investments, the Irish financial services group, has agreed to be taken over by GE Capital for £591m. This is the biggest takeover in the history of the Irish stock exchange. Woodchester agreed the terms of a recommended cash offer which would value each share at Ir£263. Credit Lyonnais holds a 54 per cent stake in Woodchester and has agreed to accept GE's offer, conditional on the agreement of the French government. The price represents a multiple of 17 times Woodchester's 1996 earnings per share and a multiple of 2.8 times its shareholders' funds at 31 December, 1996. Its main businesses are motor and equipment leasing and instalment credit.

Simon moves sector

Simon Group, the port services and engineering group, unveiled pre-tax profits up 16 per cent to £5.8m for the six months to 30 June and said it had "substantially completed" its disposal programme. It paid no dividend. It has been reclassified from the Engineering sector to the Support Services sector. Earnings per share for the ongoing business rose 53 per cent to 2.3p (1.5p) while debt fell to £48.5m after the repayment of US\$90m.

BSM drives strategy towards schools expansion in Europe

BSM, Britain's biggest motor school, is looking to change gear with a shift into information technology training in Britain and expansion of its driving schools business outside the UK.

The group, which saw its profits go into reverse at the half year after the introduction of the new written driving test sharply reduced numbers taking the practical test, wants to broaden its business.

Richard Glover, BSM's chief executive, said the move into general IT training was not imminent, but made long-term sense: "We already train our driving instructors and compile driving manuals, so we have experience of training. IT training is a fast growing area and would reduce our dependence on a narrow market."

BSM is also considering opening driving schools on the

Continent, probably in France initially where it has knowledge of the market from its relationship with Farco, the French aircraft simulator group. BSM plans to site simulators, replicas of Vauxhall Corsas, in eight UK cities by October to encourage young learner drivers to start lessons early. "The response so far has been stunning. Simulators help drivers overcome the fear factor. We think they will be a unique selling point for us," Mr Glover said.

BSM said that the introduction of the written driving test had led to a 50 per cent fall in the number of drivers applying for the practical exam. As a result half-year profits to June slumped from £2.9m to £1.5m, in line with the profits warning in April.

BSM held its half-year dividend at 2.53p.

-Saameena Ahmad

THE INVESTMENT COLUMN

EDITED BY MAGNUS GRIMOND

Tarmac faces uphill task

Tarmac has been restructuring for most of the 1990s. Brick making went in 1995 and housebuilding was swapped for Wimpey's aggregates and construction businesses in a £600m deal last year. The results are now starting to come through in spades.

Underlying profits, ignoring the £65m charge for the latest revamp unveiled two years ago, have soared from £6.7m to £38.6m in the six months to June. The strategy of focusing on heavy building materials such as aggregates and construction seems to be paying off, helped by an improving market and rationalisation savings now running at an annual rate of £40m. That mixture fed through to a surge in margins in heavy building materials, which jumped from 7.5 per cent to 9.7 per cent with the UK operation now close to 11 per cent.

Now Neville Simms, Tarmac's chief executive, is looking to raise each of the group's operations to the level of the best player in its class around the world. Certainly raising margins in construction from the current 1.1 per cent to the target of more than 3 per cent, possibly as

Zacutex, the pancreatitis treatment, in Europe not due until next year, investors have little else to guide them.

It is encouraging that British Biotech is expanding its cancer trials so extensively. Two new breast cancer trials of almost 700 patients have started this year, both largely funded by external bodies, adding to continuing trials in six cancer types.

Crucially, the group is also starting studies combining marimastat with existing chemotherapy drugs.

This blitz of cancer trials and drug combinations makes sense. To capitalise on the huge cancer market worldwide, marimastat needs to be the drug of first choice for most cancers. Moreover, if the theory behind marimastat is correct, combination therapy should prove to be the best treatment, with chemotherapy shrinking the tumour and marimastat in effect sealing it, preventing the spread of secondary tumours. While the City waits for proof, British Biotech's £173m cash pile should see it through to commercialisation.

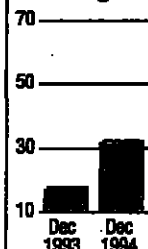
Meanwhile, the group is keeping costs in check. First-quarter losses were £1m higher at £9m but on target. Valuation remains the great unknown. Lehman Brothers reckons the shares are fair value at 155p, assuming marimastat,

Tarmac: At a glance

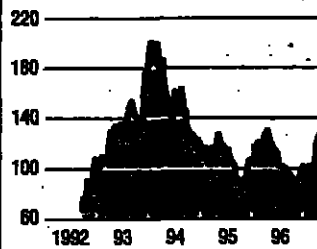
Market value: £1.2bn, share price 128.5p (+3p)

	Full year			Half year
Turnover (£bn)	2.51	2.48	2.66	1.23
Earnings per share (p)	7.8	0.1	0.4	-4.6

Gearing %



Share price, pence



early as 1999, could generate another £30m of profits.

But Mr Simms still has an uphill task. Roads still represent 15 per cent of Tarmac's turnover, while Mr Simms' proselytising zeal for the private finance initiative and facilities management work has still to make much of an impact. The group's professional services operation, which includes facilities management, may break into profit this year, boosted by the £100m Gravesham and Dartford hospital PFI project launched yesterday.

Assuming profits of £127m in the full year, the shares, up 3p to 128.5p, stand on a forward p/e of 14. With a dividend still to be covered by earnings, they are a hold.

Cancer trials boost Biotech

British Biotech's assurance yesterday that clinical trials of marimastat, its potential blockbuster cancer drug, are on track was enough to satisfy a market shell-shocked by recent calamities in the biotech sector.

The group's share price, which has dipped from a high of 270p this year, added 3.5p to close at 168p on encouraging first-quarter results.

As Biocompare and Celltech have clearly shown, management's confidence about a product is no guarantee of success.

However, with the first results from marimastat phase III trials not due until the first half of 1999 and filing of

half the value, has a 55 per cent probability of reaching market. Hold for now.

Profits rise 58% at PizzaExpress

If dough rose like the share price of PizzaExpress, the restaurant chain would be in serious trouble. The group has seen its market value multiply 10-fold to £500m in the space of four years, with results for the year to June adding another £25m yesterday.

Turnover rose by 60 per cent, of which only 9 per cent came from like-for-like sales. The rest of the growth came from 32 new restaurants during the year and 32 franchises bought in last October. As a result, profits rose by 58 per cent to £16.2m, including £660,000 from disposals.

There are now 150 outlets in the UK and the City has raised the potential ceiling from 200 to as much as 300. Domestic saturation could be only four to five years away, but the first international franchise has opened in Cyprus and moves are afoot to take the concept to the US, Italy, Spain, France, the Middle and Far East.

Greig Middleton is forecasting underlying profits of £22.23m for the current year putting the shares at 759p, up 31.5p, on a forward multiple of 30 times forecast earnings, which compares with an asset value of only 17p. If growth hits a flat spot the shares could prove indigestible to investors with a delicate constitution. High enough.

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24 September 1997

Peslier takes the Air at Ascot

With Entrepreneur, the favourite for Saturday's Queen Elizabeth II Stakes, weak in the betting, Greg Wood pinpoints Air Express as an outsider which may be worth supporting. The 16-1 chance will be assisted by a top-class rider with the booking of Olivier Peslier.

Before the Queen Elizabeth II Stakes at Ascot on Saturday all the attention will be on a horse who has won one Classic, but it is worth remembering that there will be another horse in the field who has won two. Entrepreneur, who beat Revocque in the 2,000 Guineas at New-

market, may well start favourite on Saturday, just as he did when beaten into fourth in the Derby. Air Express, by contrast, who won the equivalent Classic in both Italy and Germany before finishing second to Starborough over Saturday's course and distance at the Royal meeting, seems sure to set off at odds which are comfortably into double figures.

Not that that is ever likely to bother Clive Brittain, who runs his horses where he thinks they have a chance, regardless of what the bookies may say. There is plenty of 16-1 available about his representative, which will appear in particular to those punters who believe a horse should always be forgiven one disappointing run.

In Air Express's case, this came in the Sussex Stakes at

Goodwood, when he dropped out to finish seventh of nine to Ali-Royal, but his trainer has an explanation. "That race went completely wrong for him," Brittain said yesterday. "He was on the outside and was pushed wide and never got on a true leg. He was left out of it really, it was more the course that beat him than the opposition."

In his previous race, however, Air Express put up a performance which gives him every chance on Saturday. He may have started at 20-1 for the St James's Palace Stakes, but he was the only colt in a strong field who ever seemed likely to give Starborough a race, and was eventually beaten just a length. "He's had a nice break since Goodwood and he's fresh and well," Brittain says. "Olivier

Peslier was booked to ride this morning, so we've got a top jockey and a horse in form, and he's got a very good chance. People forget he's won two Classics because they were in Germany and Italy, but you try to go to Germany now and win a race and you'll need an A1 horse."

Air Express is one of six three-year-olds in the nine-strong entry for the QEII, and Brittain believes the winner will come from this generation. "At this time of the year the three-year-olds which are progressing do tend to be a big factor at 20-1 to a mile," he says. "At a mile and a half I think the older horses can still hold them at bay."

Entrepreneur remains the clear favourite for Saturday's race with Coral, but drifted yesterday with several other firms. Michael Stoute's colt is now the

9-4 joint-favourite with Revocque in William Hill's betting, while at Ladbrokes, Revocque has actually displaced Entrepreneur at the head of the market. Peter Chapple-Hyam's runner, who returned to the track for the first time since the spring when winning a minor race at Doncaster's St Leger meeting, is 7-4, with Entrepreneur drifting to 2-1.

Another market mover was Allied Forces, the mount of Frankie Dettori, who won this race - and everything else - 12 months ago. Ladbrokes opened yesterday with 8-1 showing against Godolphin's runner, who won the Queen Anne Stakes at the Royal meeting, but within a couple of hours he was down to 11-2. Bahhare (11-2 from 5-1) and Bijou D'Inde (16-1 from 33-1) were other changes at Hills.



Air Express: Dual Classic winner at double-figure odds for Saturday's QEII Stakes. Photograph: Phil Smith/Sporting Life

RUGBY LEAGUE

Broadbent called up by Great Britain

Paul Broadbent and two of his Sheffield Eagles team-mates have been given a consolation prize following their elimination from the Premiership by being added to Great Britain's squad to face Australia in November. Broadbent played in all five Tests on the South Pacific tour last year and will be favourite for one of the prop positions against the Aussies. He is joined in the squad by the three-quarters Keith Senior - who also toured last year - and Nick Pinkney. The Castleford prop Dean Sampson has also been included despite missing the end of the season because of an ankle injury. Their full-back Jason Flowers has also been called up after an outstanding game in their Premiership semi-final defeat at St Helens.

Huddersfield's former Great Britain captain Gary Schofield is out of the Divisional Premiership final which will open the day's events at Old Trafford this Sunday. Schofield took a hamstringing in the semi-final victory at Keighley.

The First Division's second leading try-scorer, Dean Hanger, suffered a similar injury on Sunday and could also miss a less than 50-50 chance.

The amateur and professional wings of the game are poised to set up a joint policy board - the closest approach yet to a merged governing body - to end years of acrimony. A meeting of the Rugby League and Baria, the amateur authority, has agreed the structure of the joint board and an announcement is planned for next month.

Bob Scott, the general manager of the First and Second Division Clubs' Association, dismissed speculation yesterday that non-Super League clubs had been in discussions with the ARL about the formation of a £35m winter league.

The ARL has invited Australian Super League clubs to join a new company to run the game "down under". The move follows the breakdown in merger talks with News Ltd, backers of Super League in Australia and Europe, and decreases the chances of reverting to one competition next year.

- Dave Hadfield

EQUESTRIANISM

Classy choice for Whitakers

Ten horses have travelled to London from John Whitaker's West Yorkshire yard in time for today's opening of The Horse of the Year Show at Wembley Arena. Three of them - Virtual Village Grammusch, Randi and Heyman - will be ridden by Whitaker himself. The others will be shared between his daughter, Louise, his son, Robert, and his 19-year-old stable jockey, Paul Barker.

Louise, who is 17, is the current holder of the national women's title, which she won this year. She was the victor of two classes (the Under-21 and Under-18 Championships) at Wembley last year and this week has the opportunity to ride Cowboy Magic Gammon in three international classes.

Barker is also among the 10 young riders who have been given three chances of taking on the international contestants at Wembley. He will be partnering Barry Bug, with whom he has the best British score of the winning Nations Cup team in Bratislava, incurring just 0.25 of a time fault in his two rounds.

Last year, Barry Bug was one of the horses who helped John Whitaker to a Saturday treble at The Horse of the Year Show.

- Genevieve Murphy

My Emma's Arc hopes hit

My Emma, winner of the Yorkshire Oaks at the Ebor meeting and last year's Prix Vermeille, is a doubtful runner for the Prix de l'Arc de Triomphe on 5 October. She injured herself when slipping at home over the weekend. "I am still hopeful that she will make the Arc, but we will know more in a couple of days," Rae Guest, her trainer, said yesterday.

Tuesday's Middle Park Stakes at Newmarket has found a last-minute sponsor in the form of the Thoroughbred Corporation, the ownership group which represents Ahmed bin Salman. The same name will be attached to the Group One Dewhurst Stakes, to be run at the same course in just over three weeks' time.

RESULTS

NOTTINGHAM

2.15: 1. RAINBOW ROSE (J) 9-2; 2. Taming 1-1; 3. Night Hawk 1-14; 4-6 (Shirley) 1-1; 5. (M) (Stable) 1-1; 6. (M) (Stable) 1-1; 7. (M) (Stable) 1-1; 8. (M) (Stable) 1-1; 9. (M) (Stable) 1-1; 10. (M) (Stable) 1-1; 11. (M) (Stable) 1-1; 12. (M) (Stable) 1-1; 13. (M) (Stable) 1-1; 14. (M) (Stable) 1-1; 15. (M) (Stable) 1-1; 16. (M) (Stable) 1-1; 17. (M) (Stable) 1-1; 18. (M) (Stable) 1-1; 19. (M) (Stable) 1-1; 20. (M) (Stable) 1-1; 21. (M) (Stable) 1-1; 22. (M) (Stable) 1-1; 23. (M) (Stable) 1-1; 24. (M) (Stable) 1-1; 25. (M) (Stable) 1-1; 26. (M) (Stable) 1-1; 27. (M) (Stable) 1-1; 28. (M) (Stable) 1-1; 29. (M) (Stable) 1-1; 30. (M) (Stable) 1-1; 31. (M) (Stable) 1-1; 32. (M) (Stable) 1-1; 33. (M) (Stable) 1-1; 34. (M) (Stable) 1-1; 35. (M) (Stable) 1-1; 36. (M) (Stable) 1-1; 37. (M) (Stable) 1-1; 38. (M) (Stable) 1-1; 39. (M) (Stable) 1-1; 40. (M) (Stable) 1-1; 41. (M) (Stable) 1-1; 42. (M) (Stable) 1-1; 43. (M) (Stable) 1-1; 44. (M) (Stable) 1-1; 45. (M) (Stable) 1-1; 46. 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GOLF: COUNTDOWN TO THE RYDER CUP



Tiger Woods drives at the 11th at Valderrama yesterday, watched by his American team-mates (left to right) Lee Janzen, Scott Hoch and Mark O'Meara. Photograph: David Ashdown

Danger: Tigertime zone straight ahead

In Tiger Woods the American team possesses the hottest property in golf. Woods is making his debut in the Ryder Cup, but, as his amateur career showed, the head-to-head version of the game perfectly suits his aggressive style and flair for the dramatic.

Few people in sport, let alone golf, have the ability to make something out of nothing quite like Seve Ballesteros. Five major titles, five World Match Play crowns and a distinguished Ryder Cup career attest to that. Among jewels was his 1983 encounter with Arnold Palmer at Wentworth. One down and in trouble at the last, Ballesteros pitched in from 50 yards off the green to force a play-off, which, naturally, he won.

As non-playing captain, Ballesteros will not be able to conjure such magic at Valderrama this week. But in Tiger Woods, the American team have someone who certainly can.

His aggressive style can be even more devastating in matchplay than usual, with an errant shot only costing one hole rather than the double, triple and quadruple bogeys that have bedevilled his scorecards in the majors since his stunning US Masters victory. So much has happened to golf, as well as to the 21-year-old phenomenon in the last year, that it hardly seems pos-

sible that on 25 August, 1996, Woods was still an amateur golfer.

That was the day Woods won his third US Amateur Championship. A few hours later, guided as ever by his father Earl, Woods signed his first contract with Mark McCormack's International Management Group and then with Nike; the latter for the little matter of \$40m (£25m).

Woods, two years into a degree at Stanford University, had faced intense scrutiny about his future plans, but everything was on hold pending an attempt to become the first player to win three US Amateurs in a row at Pumpkin Ridge, near Portland, Oregon. Phil Knight, the CEO of Nike whose headquarters are only 20 minutes away, was a conspicuous member of Woods' gallery all week.

By the day of the 36-hole final, against the Florida student Steve Scott, that gallery was greater than many US Amateurs have attracted for an entire week. NBC decided to show the final live on network television and its coverage attracted over double the audience of the World Series, where Phil Mickelson played Greg Norman. Players in the locker-room there, and at the Greater Vancouver Open, were tuned into Tigertime.

What made the event essential viewing was not the occasion's wider significance, but what Woods actually did. In rallying from being five down after 11 holes, and from two down with three to play, Woods once more confirmed his pedigree as a true champion.

Such amateur dramas were routine for Woods as he won six US Amateur titles in a row. From 1991 to '93 he won three US Junior Amateurs, the third by achieving birdies at the last two holes to square the match, getting up and down from a bunker at the 18th, and then winning at the first extra hole. When he became, at 18, the youngest winner of the US Amateur in history, Woods was six down to Trip Kuehne after 13 holes in the final. Kuehne had made birdies at seven of those holes on the Sawgrass course which annually stages The Players' Championship, but could not keep up his superb golf.

BY ANDY FARRELL

After lunch, Woods won three holes in a row to be one down with seven to play, but at the 32nd and 33rd he drove into the trees and scrambled brilliantly for two halves in par. At the 34th, he got up and down from 60 yards for a birdie four to draw level and, at the next, Sawgrass's treacherous par-three to an island green, his tee shot spun back off the back fence to 14 feet. Naturally, he holed the putt and a par at the last confirmed the best comeback in the history of the event.

A year later, at Newport, Rhode Island, Woods was down three holes ear-

ly on against Buddy Marucci, but holed a curling 20-footer to go two up at the 33rd. He needed the cushion for he lost the next, but, at the last, Woods hit his eight-iron directly over the flag. The ball landed 15 feet past the hole and spun back stiff. Bye, bye, Buddy.

So to Pumpkin Ridge. Woods hit only three fairways and four greens on the front nine against Scott. His estimated morning round was a 76. Woods missed the green at the first hole of the afternoon, but that was the last he missed. After birdies at the 21st and 22nd, he won the 24th and the 27th to get back to one down. But Scott chipped in to win the next and, after a roller-coaster ride, went back to two up at the 32nd.

At the 34th, Woods had a six-foot putt for a birdie, but Scott had to remind him to replace his marker after Woods had moved it away from his opponent's line. Without Scott's act of generosity, Woods would have been penalised the hole and lost the match. Of course, Woods holed the putt to go one down.

Now the atmosphere was wild, and it got even more so when Woods holed a 30-foot downhill birdie putt at the next. The fist-pumping celebration that followed has become his trademark. The last hole of regulation and the first of the play-off were halved, before a par at the 38th, Scott having lipped out, gave Woods victory. Scott offered his hand in congratulation, but Woods was buried in embraces by his mother, father and entourage.

By winning 20 and losing only two of his matches in five US Amateurs,

Woods' record is the best of all time, beating even Bobby Jones (W43, L8) and Jack Nicklaus (W24, L5). In all USGA amateur events, Woods lost only three times.

In his only experience of team matchplay events, at the 1995 Walker Cup which America lost at Royal Portcawl, Woods showed that hitting the ball 100 yards past his opponent could not guarantee victory as he lost to Gary Wolstenholme on the first day. Overall, his record for the week was less than inspired won two, lost two.

"That was a little different level to which he will experience now," Mark O'Meara said of Woods' amateur success. "His intimidation factor was quite a bit higher in amateur golf than it is in professional golf." Woods' game has developed too, though, and his flair for the dramatic will prove dangerous as he makes his Ryder Cup debut. "He loves the challenge, he's young, he's hungry and he is a competitor," added O'Meara.

"I have always preferred matchplay over medal play," Woods said after his first official practice round as a Ryder Cup player yesterday. "It's one-on-one and you don't get the chance to do that very often."

There is more emotion involved. You can ride the wave of momentum, or get stomped on. I think it is great. It takes more courage to play matchplay than strokeplay. In strokeplay it is all down to the last nine holes on Sunday. In matchplay, it starts on the first tee."

A sporting event for those who are able to afford it

Only people who have been living in a cave without news delivery can have failed to notice the attention being paid presently to a golf match in southern Spain between millionaires representing the United States and Europe.

If the Ryder Cup does not command a great deal of interest outside the white-collar, middle class golfing community in our former transatlantic colony, it has grown into a sports event beyond anything that could have been imagined by the Hertfordshire seed merchant who put the idea forward.

We are not only talking here about an explosion of commercial activity but further proof that the best travelled sports fans are British. Apart from those who trek regularly across Europe with their football teams, there is never a shortage of support in the furthest flung cricket and rugby locations. So many British racegoers turn up annually for the Arc de Triomphe at Longchamp that Parisians are now inclined to give it a miss. Also, it doesn't require the presence of one of our own in the ring for British fight fans to show up for championship contests in Las Vegas and Atlantic City.

Wandering around Valderrama's lush contours, the language you are most likely to hear is English. A conservative estimate is that Spaniards will be outnumbered by 5-1 in the audience of 25,000. In view of the fact that there are only 110,000 registered Spanish golfers in a population of around 44m and that golf here centres on tourism, this is hardly surprising. Nevertheless, and allowing for the number of British expatriates resident in the area, it emphasises what the Ryder Cup has become for people who can afford it.

Over the past 25 years it has grown and grown. In 1975, on the way to watch Muhammad Ali take on Joe Frazier in Manila, I stopped off to take in the Ryder Cup (before the European format was adopted) at Laurel Valley near Pittsburgh.

The first day there I was driven to the course by an avid golfer who had taken a week's leave from schoolteaching to assist with the arrangements. "What is this Ryder Cup?" he asked. Expressing a view still shared by the majority of his compatriots, he added "I don't think there can be much in all this if there isn't any money at stake."

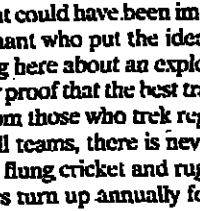
It was the Ryder Cup in which Brian Barries twice defeated Jack Nicklaus (otherwise it was a familiar story: America defeating Great Britain and Ireland by 21-11) but even that did not greatly excite American hacks. Insularity comes into this too. Pittsburgh's leading newspaper at the time, *The Post-Gazette*, covered the match in 12 paragraphs.

As recently as 1987, when Tony Jacklin's team of Europeans defeated the US at Muirfield Village, the reaction of most Americans was "What is the Ryder Cup and why did we lose it?" The *New York Times* interest was confined to a reference in the sports round-up just above results in cycling and yachting.

In 1985 reporters were not present in enough numbers to constitute an unlawful assembly. In Valderrama more than 500 media representatives work in a tent large to accommodate a medium-sized airliner.

The day after Europe's remarkable victory at Oak Hill two years ago I took a train from Rochester to Albany in the company of passengers who had travelled overnight from Chicago. On being informed of the result, they expressed little if any interest. A subsequent telephone call to Rochester confirmed that it was still awash with the celebrations of British supporters. Fly the flag and you are sure to find them. If it's not the Barry Army, it's the monied class that has descended in droves on Valderrama.

KEN JONES AT THE RYDER CUP



COMPLETE FIRST-CLASS AVERAGES FOR THE 1997 CRICKET SEASON

BATTING										BOWLING										
Qualification: 500 runs	M	I	No Runs	HS	Ave	100	50	C	S	Qualification: 25 wickets	O	M	R	Ave	SWIN	BB	5W	10W	15W	
G A Hick (Worce)	26	6	524	303	87.27	8	4	20	0	D P Phillips (Kent)	26	4	378	107	25.04	1	0	0	0	0
P J Jones (Glouc)	26	6	524	195	85.38	7	4	20	0	B J Phillips (Kent)	26	4	378	107	25.04	1	0	0	0	0
M P Maynard (Glouc)	26	7	170	61	65.00	3	7	21	0	R J Phillips (Kent)	26	4	378	107	25.04	1	0	0	0	0
R T Ponsford (Sussex)	26	6	524	371	87.27	4	2	20	0	S J Phillips (Kent)	26	4	378	107	25.04	1	0	0	0	0
S C Lehmann (North)	26	6	524	371	87.27	4	2	20	0	P A Parsons (Somerset)	26	4	378	107	25.04	1	0	0	0	0
N J Llewellyn (Middle)	26	6	524	371	87.27	4	2	20	0	D C Jones (Glouc)	26	4	378	107	25.04	1	0	0	0	0
G P Thorne (Sussex)	26	6	524	371	87.27	4	2	20	0	D L Moody (Lancs)	26	4	378	107	25.04	1	0	0	0	0
T G Elliott (Sussex)	26	6	524	371	87.27	4	2	20	0	R H Haynes (Worce)	26	4	378	107	25.04	1	0	0	0	0
S P Law (Essex)	26	6	524	371	87.27	4	2	20	0	C W J Athey (Sussex)	26	4	378	107	25.04	1	0	0	0	0
M R Ransford (Middle)	26	6	524	371	87.27	4	2	20	0	M A Taylor (Sussex)	26	4	378	107	25.04	1	0	0	0	0
S C Nash (Glouc)	26	6	524	371	87.27	4	2	20	0	D J Johnson (Worce)	26	4	378	107	25.04	1	0	0	0	0
S R Waugh (Sussex)	26	6	524	371	87.27	4	2	20	0	V P Carters (Lancs)	26	4	378	107	25.04	1	0	0	0	0
T A Waters (Durham)	26	6	524	371	87.27	4	2	20	0	K R Spinks (Worce)	26	4	378	107	25.04	1	0	0	0	0
M A Ebdon (Durham)	26	6	524	371	87.27	4	2	20	0	D C Robinson (Sussex)	26	4	378	107	25.04	1	0	0	0	0
D A Leach (Durham)	26	6	524	371	87.27	4	2	20	0	J E Morris (Durham)	26	4	378	107	25.04	1	0	0	0	0
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FOOTBALL

Spurs offer £5m plus a player for Ravanelli

Fabrizio Ravanelli, who has become a £7m millstone around Middlesbrough's neck, could be on his way to Tottenham. The 28-year-old Italian striker with a flair for flamboyant goals and exorbitant wage demands is the subject of a £5m bid by Spurs. The Premiership club are also prepared to sweeten the deal by offering Ruel Fox or Chris Armstrong as well as cash. Middlesbrough invited offers

after the failure of Ravanelli to agree terms with Everton or secure a move back to Italy. He met the Boro chairman, Steve Gibson, on a flying visit to Teesside yesterday, only hours after the club's manager, Bryan Robson, had stated that the man who scored 31 goals last season during his team's vain attempt to avoid relegation had put any thoughts of buying new players on hold.

"I won't move into the transfer market until the Ravanelli situation is sorted out," said Robson, who has made it clear that he does not want the former Juventus forward to train with his first-team squad. Spurs see Ravanelli as the player with the skills to lift them out of a disappointing start to the season, which has not been helped by a worrying injury to Les Ferdinand, their £6m

summer signing from Newcastle United. The outcome will again depend on Ravanelli's salary. His reported £40,000 a week at Boro is unlikely to be matched by Spurs, but they may be prepared to shell out £30,000 a week. A severance payment from Boro would also soften the financial blow for the grey-haired "White Feather". Across London, West Ham

have set their sights a little lower, with a £1.5m move for Dele Adebola, the 22-year-old Crewe Alexandra striker. The Liverpool-born Adebola has made his mark in the First Division this season and Crewe would be unwise to reject the Hammers' bid, because the 6ft 3in front-runner will be out of contract at the end of the season. If he leaves, Adebola will become the third Crewe player to

step into the Premier League in the last couple of months. Danny Murphy has already made first-team appearances at Liverpool since a £1.5m switch, while Robbie Savage went to Leicester for £750,000. Carlton Palmer yesterday completed a £1m move to Southampton from Leeds United. But the former England midfielder's transfer came too late for him to face his old club

at The Dell tonight. The 31-year-old Palmer cost Leeds £2.6m from Sheffield Wednesday in 1994. Howard Kendall has made a player-plus-cash offer to Manchester City for Uwe Rösler. The Everton manager is willing to let defender Earl Barrett go to Maine Road and also hand over £500,000 for the transfer-listed German striker. — Alan Nixon

TENNIS: GRAND SLAM CUP

Rusedski finds the aces to grab a fistful of dollars

Greg Rusedski marked his debut at the \$6m Compaq Grand Slam Cup yesterday with a first-round victory that will add at least \$250,000 to prize-money fast approaching \$1m for the year. John Roberts sees Britain's sharpshooter start fast in Munich.

United States and Australia in Washington.

"I think the time zone was on my side," Rusedski said after recovering from a disappointing start to win, 4-6, 6-1, 7-5 after an hour and 50 minutes.

The Australian questioned the fairness of the situation. "You can't prepare for getting off a plane and having two hits on a court and playing a match. You just can't do that," he said.

"I was actually interested why, in particular, myself, Mark [Woodforde] and [Marcelo] Rios, who came from different continents, had to play today. There's a match tomorrow involving guys who had Davis Cup [ties] to play in Europe."

Woodbridge, who won Saturday's Davis Cup doubles rubber partnering Mark Woodforde against Pete Sampras and Todd Martin, broke Rusedski in his first two service games and led 4-0 before the Briton could gather himself. Standing a yard behind the baseline, Woodbridge was returning Rusedski's missiles with comparative ease at this stage.

Rusedski broke back for 2-4 and salvaged some self belief by saving three break points at 3-5 before his opponent served out the first set after 38 minutes.

If Woodbridge had succeeded in parrying Rusedski's far, his own serve was beginning to cause ominous problems for the Australian. By the end of the match he had double-faulted 14 times. Whether this was a consequence of jet-lag, let-jag or simply trying too hard is difficult to judge. But it was costly.

Midway through the second set, Woodbridge was setting off the electronic service-line monitor with such regularity that he might have been composing a tune. Rusedski, meantime, was mounting up the aces to a total of 20.

Chipping and charging to put Woodbridge's serve under pressure, Rusedski levelled the match and then created three opportunities to break at the end of the final set. Woodbridge showed signs of losing his

composure, hitting the side of his shoes with his racket. But he managed to hold serve, at which point doubts surfaced concerning Rusedski's prospects.

The Briton responded by saving three break points at 3-4, breaking for 6-5 and recovering from 0-30 to hold for the match.

Kafelnikov defeated Sergi Bruguera 6-4, 6-3. The Spaniard was unable to take advantage of a break point after Kafelnikov double-faulted when serving

for the opening set at 5-4, and was subsequently punished by three consecutive drives from the Russian's forehand.

Kafelnikov broke the Spaniard to love in the opening game of the second set, only to double-fault on a game point for 2-0. Bruguera broke back, turning Kafelnikov into overhitting a backhand. The Spaniard could not make further progress, however, losing his serve in the third game after netting a backhand.

Bruguera showed his frustration by whacking his chair with his racket during the change-over. Kafelnikov made better use of his racket, driving a forehand across the court to convert his second match point with Bruguera serving at 5-3.

"I like the indoor surface, because my game is very simple," Kafelnikov said. "I rely on my groundstrokes and a little bit on my serve. There were a couple of stages in the match,

especially in the second set, where I thought things might change. But at those crucial stages I was able to play the right shot at the right time. That's why it was a pretty comfortable win for me."

Woodforde, substituting for the injured Richard Krajicek, made an encouraging start against Rios, winning a tie-break, 7-2. The Chilean steadied his game and wore down his fellow left-hander to win 6-7, 6-3, 6-1.



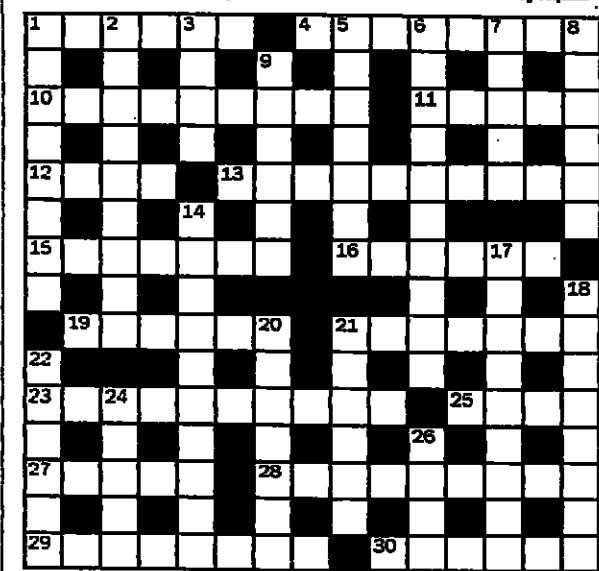
Greg Rusedski attacks a forehand volley during his three-set defeat of Todd Woodbridge in Munich yesterday

Photograph: Gary M Prior/Allsport

THE INDEPENDENT CROSSWORD

No. 3412, Wednesday 24 September

By Aquila



Today's Solution

ACROSS
1 Ukelet
4 Plant to cure
10 Light-fingered sort
11 Topping stuff for severe cold symptoms
12 Shakespeare's long-distance call in London
13 The underground stop a dike being built
15 Entertainer to steal article caught in the execution
16 Continue to nurse this common subject of strain
19 Earl Grey's Bill to turn over a new leaf
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Pontypridd assure Brive of warm welcome to Wales

The top brass of Pontypridd mounted a charm offensive of sorts yesterday, assuring the Frenchmen of Brive that this weekend's Heineken Cup match at Sardis Road would be a "true rugby occasion" at which they would be welcomed. Chris Hewett hears a plea for common sense to prevail.

It was the bodyguard business that really flummoxed Cyneddy Thomas. As if Pontypridd's genial chief executive did not have enough problems on his plate in smoothing the path for Saturday's renewal of rugby hostilities with Brive, he had just been informed of the French side's threat to fly in their own security men.

"Bodyguards? What's going on here?" a flabbergasted Thomas asked yesterday. "Why would they need their own bodyguards? What's more, what are these bodyguards planning to bring with them? Knuckle-dusters? It's ridiculous, completely over the top. If French security men try to come into the ground on Saturday, they'll be searched."

The sporting earthquake set rumbling by the outbreaks of violence during and after Ponty's match in Brive 11 days ago continue to register

on rugby's equivalent of the Richter Scale. On Tuesday, the clubs were fined £30,000 apiece — half of it suspended — by the tournament directors and told to get on with Saturday's return. The Welshmen were none too happy at the size of that penalty but swallowed it with gritted teeth. Their opponents, meanwhile, finally overcame their reservations about visiting the Sardis Road bear pit and agreed to turn up, although their president, Patrick Sebastian, said he would resign at the end of the season in protest at the board's failure to discipline Ponty more heavily.


"We're looking forward to Saturday," Thomas said. "To have moved the game to a neutral venue, as was suggested in some quarters, would have been the most unjust punishment of all because our supporters want the chance to come along and get behind us. They'll do it with passion but they won't be hostile or abusive. All visitors from Brive, be they players or supporters, can rest assured they will be treated well. Rugby will be the winner."

Having heard the Ponty hordes described as "semi-civilised animals" by Laurent Seigne, the Brive coach, Thomas did his level best to temper his response. "We have deliberately not allowed ourselves to be dragged into an insult-swapping scenario; we have not uttered a single word that could be interpreted as an insult to anyone

from Brive." Finally, though, he dropped his guard. "Semi-civilised? At least we've reached that stage. I don't know what category it leaves him in."

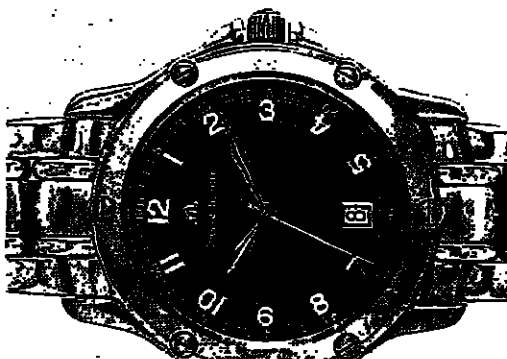
Pontypridd officials have met with the local constabulary to discuss a "realistic and sensible" level of policing and stewarding for Saturday's match. Thomas said he would also contact his opposite number in Brive as a matter of urgency to extend the hand of friendship and guarantee the Frenchmen a safe and enjoyable, if not successful, weekend in the heartland of Welsh rugby. That the match will be a sell-out is a certainty and that should help Ponty survive the serious dent in their bank balance caused by their unprecedented financial penalty. "We've already suffered financial punishment because of this episode — we were forced to rearrange our flights back home from Brive and that doubled our travelling expenses — but we'll find the money somehow," Thomas said. "Mind you, we'll also be keeping a very close eye on future disciplinary activity."

And with good reason. By insisting that the on-field violence alone could be taken into account — French police are still investigating the après-match shenanigans — the directors are hostages to fortune. If every mass pinch-up carries a £30,000 penalty, we could soon see more clubs in the bankruptcy court than on the playing field.



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